

A DOOR OPENED

ALEXANDER MCKENZIE

F. G. Cook .

Cambridge

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A DOOR OPENED

Behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut.

ALEXANDER McKENZIE



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TO
KENNETH AND MARGARET

My Dear Children

I GIVE THIS BOOK

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I

A DOOR OPENED

REVELATION iii. 8

A DOOR OPENED

THE words concerning the open door are from the last book of the Bible. The thought which they express could have been taken from any one of the books; for it is the vigorous, pervasive truth which is declared by Prophets and Apostles, and most of all by the Lord Himself, that God is stronger than any man, and that his strength is pledged to our advantage. It seems a commonplace assertion as it is made in this form; but the right apprehension of it is by no means commonplace. The right use of it would give to our life a vigor and constancy which would enable and ennoble it through all its course. But in these words which a man heard when he was a prisoner with a free spirit the strength of God is seen more clearly, and not as a force which overpowers everything before it and compels the results which it desires. It is seen in its intelligence, recognizing its own previous work, and keeping faith with itself and with the men whom it has made and endowed. It recognizes human character and lib-

erty. Hence it does not abandon men, as if they were to live alone; nor does it drive them, as if their freedom were a fiction and delusion. It respects manhood, and pays its homage to the imperial gift which makes a man the child of God, partaking of his nature, with his will incarnate in the life. It sees before him a possible destiny of honor and wealth, and offers him, not compulsion that he must secure this, but opportunity that he may possess it. It places before him an open door which neither he nor his fellows could have opened, "and no man can shut it." The picture is dignified and simple. Whatever shuts a man out from his true career, from the high estate for which he was created, has heard the commanding voice of the Most High: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors." To man He saith, "Enter ye in." Thus liberty is matched with opportunity. Our glory waits upon our will.

It was so when Christ was here. He was in the greatness of his strength, yet He did not compel men to hear Him and to yield to his sway. He met them with invitation, promise, instruction. "Never man spake like this man," but it was speaking. He came into the world as the Word, and not as the earthquake or the fire. He did not force those who labored to take his rest. "Come unto me," He said. He did not drag men in his

train. "Follow me," He said. Light was for those who would have it ; life for those who would receive it. He said, "I am the way ;" "I am the door ;" "Strive to enter in." Sow your seed in good ground ; this is the good ground. Cast your net where there are fish ; this is the right side of the boat. Build your house where it will stand. All this is opportunity, which each man must improve for himself. The Lord never forgets who we are. He does not destroy in the act of saving. He preserves the manhood in its integrity, and lets it prove itself. With the earth at the feet of men, and heaven above them, He made both possible, but neither sure. "Behold," He saith, "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened." So much was certain. The uncertainty was all in this, whether a man would pass through the open door, inheriting the earth, the citizen of heaven.

We shall find this principle of life wherever we go. It is inwrought with the constitution of the world and its affairs. Every man is glad that it is so. The one thing which we ask is an opportunity commensurate with our ability, and this we have. Certainly we who are here have it in ample measure. By the labors and gifts, the sacrifices, the prayers of good men in many generations, the University opens and holds open the door before the whole wide world of knowledge. Before we

were born the doors were opened, and never have they been closed. We cannot tell how much this means, nor know how vain and baffled were our endeavors, how hopeless our ambition, how fettered our aspiration, were it not for that which other hearts have desired, and other hands than ours have wrought. The University can do little more than to broaden the doors, and keep them open day and night. This she will do, and nothing shall hinder the willing feet from crossing the threshold, the willing mind from gathering the treasure beyond. She does not bestow learning; she grants the opportunity of acquiring it. She points to her beaten path which leads among the stars, and bids men mount up and dwell with truth. The University is not a shop for selling knowledge, nor a factory for weaving it into cloth which can be cut in pieces and fashioned into garments; knowledge is not a commodity which can be so dealt with. It is the door, the opened, open door through which desire and diligence can pass. In the enlargement of these later years this has been made more true, as there has come to be less content with the transmitting of information from memory to memory, less belief in the impartation of facts, and a larger purpose to let every man work out his own education; and now the chief thing which is offered is the opportunity to get what we ought to have.

The words of the open door are to be taken in the broadest sense. Special schools may open the way to special departments of truth. More than that must be done here. The name we bear requires it. University is a very large term. It is not an angle, but a circle. Its circumference touches the universe of truth, and is broken into doors. The word of which we are fondest and proudest, setting it at the centre of the seal, stands in its wholeness, an undivided, unbounded Veritas, — a word so large that it takes three books to hold it, and the three stand for the whole. To this liberal plan of work every department is devoted; with how high spirit and generous effort and scholarly purpose need not be told here. The present is not more indebted to the past than the past to the present. No instructor draws a line around his teaching, to shut it in from the greater world of truth, or to shut out the truth which has a right to enter his domain. The breadth of learning finds its expression in the correlation of studies and in the genial fellowship of scholars. Oldest and youngest, we stand together upon an untraversed field, whose lines are lost in the distant and boundless heavens. It is this which gives dignity to our common work, and warrants the belief that we shall move on with the process of the centuries. If these things are true, it is clear that there must

be a place within, or beside, or beyond every department of the University, in which the most serious themes of life can be studied, as well as others, and the most sacred interests regarded: in which a man can seek and find the highest truths which concern him; can know God, his Father, who desires to be known; and himself, the child of God; in which divinity and humanity, time and eternity, life and immortality, duty and conscience, can be thought upon reverently, faithfully, as doth become a man. These are not the special studies of a theological school alone, but the studies for every school and for every scholar. What were thought which does not think of God; knowledge which does not know Him; life which does not live in the life and light of the world? How can we respect the science of mind which leaves out the one mind which is perfect and supreme; or the science of things which does not reach beyond everything which we can handle to Him whose hands fashioned the heavens and the earth? How shall we revere the study which stops while there are grave questions which can be answered, and larger truths which can be known? If it be impracticable for every lecture-room and laboratory to teach the name and method and purpose of Him by whom all things consist, then is it imperative, for the sake of liberal learning, that there be some

place where this advanced work can be done, and that the place draw every teacher and scholar to itself. Therefore in this group of buildings this Chapel stands in its own right. Among the multitudinous studies the teachings of this house belong. Every man needs that which it is the design of these services to provide, needs to enter and frequent the realm of spiritual truth which invites the man who himself is spirit, where he can see God manifest to man. There is no compulsion to hear, still less to accept, still less to employ that which is spoken. But there is the opportunity. "Behold," He saith, "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened."

But this is not the only purpose for which this house and these services stand. They are not for learning alone; not learning and conduct combined make up the whole duty of a man. Learning, when it is free, rises into worship. Conduct, untrammelled, becomes communion with God. It is the becoming recognition of our relation to Him, of our dependence which is complete, and of his benefits which are constant, to live as in his presence and to begin every day with the distinct thought of God. We must do this when alone. But it is a good thing for us who live together to come up to his house in company, to read his word in unison, to utter our common prayer for the day

into which we are venturing. To this high act of the spirit which is the man we are called. Into this worship the door is open. To the willing, waiting mind God delights to reveal himself, spirit to spirit, that we may walk in the light, children of the light, and in "the power of an endless life."

It is in keeping with the purpose of this University, from the day when that young Puritan minister who sits yonder beneath the open heavens lifted his eyes from his book to found a house where books should have their home and do their work, to this day when the great questions of life are receiving new attention and the problems of conduct are solved in charity and faith, and there is no limit to our thought and hope,—it is in keeping with our original and unalterable purpose, that Christianity, in its largest meaning and closest application, should have our devout and studious regard. Something is due to our origin and our commission ; to intelligence and uprightness. The province of Religion has widened till it is no longer a system whereby the confiding can in the world to come escape perdition and attain to paradise. It does indeed make the future sure and safe ; but it does this by making the present wise and dutiful. Religion believes in to-day, teeming with its necessities ; in this world of God, where the divine life has been made visible. It is here

first that God reveals himself to men. It is here first that men must see Him, hear Him, enter into his decrees. The words which name and define spiritual things, that is, real things, lasting things, should be in the warp and woof of every man's language and living, every man's; surely of every man in a college with its vigorous life, its uncommitted thought, its open mind and heart. In the studious retirement of these days, apart from the excitements of the outer world, we have leisure for all which greatly concerns us, and hospitality for all truth and duty. We may furnish ourselves completely for the work which waits for us; which claims, as never before, the stout hands and large hearts of men who have a broad education and a liberal training in the things which the world, the stricken, impoverished, blind and blundering world, needs the most, far, far the most. We ought so to live and think that the world will feel the beneficent impulse which moves along these walks and issues from these doors and brings the kingdom of heaven nearer to the earth. We ought so to think and speak, to teach and learn, that good men without the gate shall lift up their eyes in confidence to these consecrated halls. We might even now give courage to those who are fighting the battle of right against wrong, and struggling for the good against the forces of a

naughty world ; and carrying the kindly light, the immortal life, over sea and land. Here is our opportunity, to which our future turns. All this we might do. "Behold," He saith, "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened."

It is not the design of the College services to make a defense of Christianity, but to proclaim its truths and to administer its grace. Some things are settled. Two hundred and fifty years must have accomplished something in the knowledge of truth which needs neither undoing nor unlearning. Some things are of interest for what they are in themselves ; some for the work which they do. These interests are combined in Christianity. If a long and eventful history is fascinating, the history of Christianity exceeds in fascination. If philosophy employs the high faculties of the mind, the philosophy of Christianity engages those which are highest. If the study of morals is profitable, the ethics of Christianity grant a larger reward. If daily duties, and the relations of man with man, and the complex requisitions of society require continual study and offer a recompense, much more does Christianity claim attention for the laws of personal and social life which it presents. If the ministration of that which is of the earth is good, the ministration of the heavenly is glorious.

Think of the history which is before us. In a

village of an obscure province a child was born for whom the inn had no room, the world no care. The day of that birth has become the new starting-point for all civilized life. Not from the building of the earth, or the founding of a city, do men reckon the years, but from the coming of Him whose name in this remote century is emblazoned in these windows ; from whose coming the nation dates its treaty and the school its diploma. The most significant fact in the newspapers of the world is in the few figures underneath the title. Here is something to be understood and accounted for, — who He was, why He came, what He did, by what means He gained the place He holds ; what lessons He left, what duties cluster around his precepts, what hopes wait upon his promises. These things intelligent men must know. Break the rocks, search the stars, measure the forces of nature, explore the mind of man ; but above all things know Him from whom the lines of our life run out, by whom our thoughts are held. This is for every man, like the alphabet and the Golden Rule. Selection does not reach so far as this. The elective system pauses on the confines of this theme. This is not one of many provinces in which we can choose our home. It is the one sky, the one light, the one atmosphere over and around all the provinces, in which all true things grow and are glad.

This is not one piece of knowledge. It is the fabric of all liberal knowledge, and belongs in every scholar's endeavor, in every scholar's wealth. There is more than enough in that which has been wrought under this new name and new date to enlist the thought of every one who cares for men, who would know their governments, their literature, their science, who cares for the most sacred things of life. Where, save under this name, is humanity respected, and liberty maintained, and the will of the people made the law of the land? These are not dogmas. They are the facts of human experience, of which the large-minded scholar must make account, and he can do it here.

The work is more personal. It is not the study of externals and generalities. Here is a principle of life claiming a divine origin, and consenting to be proved by its works. Wherever this finds a man he grows in stature. He feels the thrill of a new force. He becomes purer, stronger, kinder. He is inspired for heroic, unselfish deeds. The spirit which he asserts itself and rules over him. He walks with God, and has an immediate immortality. Fast as men feel this society becomes better; evil disappears and righteousness possesses the earth. I know but too well the wrong things which have been done in this name. Even bearing

these, the record is a surpassing witness to the power of the new life. It is not for a mere belief, or a mere admiration, that the divine life comes to us. It lays its precepts upon us, and summons all men to the doing of its will. It demands confidence because it is true and obedience because it is right. "The words that I speak unto you," He said, "they are spirit and they are life." It is not an arbitrary authority, the rule of the strongest. It is the supremacy of the best; and the best in a man, in a world of men, has the right to rule. This is spiritual truth and spiritual force, and the only response is spiritual life. We may worship in Jerusalem and build an altar on Gerizim. But trusting in neither mountain can a man rise to the height of his own best life. In spirit, in truth, the man may worship God, life answering to life, love commingling with love, the divine with the divine. The door is open here.

Every day is holy to the holy man. Every hour is sacred to him when life is sacred; the evening, when the work of the day is done and in the consciousness of fidelity the workman takes the rest God gives to his beloved; the evening of life, when the years are spent and the days are counted; when the memory of work cheers the tired heart and is the presage of reward. Sacred is the morning of life, when the weapons are all unbroken and the

shield unscarred, and the heart beats high in the assurance of conquest. It is the time for worship and for consecration to the best. Sacred is the morning of the day, when the eventful hours wait with their claims and chances, the seedtime of years which are to be ; when so much of eternity is to be lived before sunset. Let us pray at evening. Let us pray in the morning, alone, in company, going apart from our common ways, in quietness lifting up the heart and voice. A day is blessed to its end whose beginning is with God. The word lingers in the mind, the song enters into the work, the prayer keeps the earnest soul with Him who "is never so far off as even to be near." All this is possible. "Behold," He saith, "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened."

There are open doors which we have no power to enter. There are opportunities which are but a name. This is not of them. The artist is allowed to copy the painting of a master, yet he cannot do it. Nothing is lacking to the permission, but the picture does not come. The divine Child remains in his mother's arms, the transfigured Christ treads upon the clouds. Not so is it when God gives us permission to live. The word is with power, as when He said "Let there be light." No delusion is concealed in the commandment, no disappointment lurks within the proffers of the gospel. We

can know. We can do. We can be. God is before us. "I have called thee," He saith, and "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened." We do not flit among the flowers, or pillow our head upon their fragrance. We enter into them and see the providence which clothes the grass. We do not rise to the under surface of the stars. We are admitted among them, where the heavens are telling his glory. Let us move on. It ill becomes us to despair, standing here, with knowledge and duty hallowing the ground. Far as study will take us let us go: far out to the probabilities which thought suggests, to the possibilities it hints at: and beyond all these to that serener clime where the possible and probable yield to the verities: where He lives who is the Light. We honor what we know by learning more. We honor our teachers by pushing out along the way in which they have started us. We fulfill our life when we are one with Him who said, "Because I live ye shall live."

In the pavement of Westminster Abbey you may find a group of stones which bear the names of men who by their own merit have won a resting-place beside kings. They crowned themselves. One walked among the stars. One searched the Scriptures. One went forth to save a stricken land. Of these three each could have been a pagan and

have worked as a pagan. But for the fulfillment of their life they needed a larger intelligence, a profounder purpose, a higher, purer inspiration. They called themselves after Him whose name is Truth. Herschel broke through the inclosure of heaven and saw the hand which holds the stars. This, not less than this, was Astronomy. Trench learned of God from the Son of God, and of man from the Son of man, and of the stars from the student of the stars, and he became the instructor of men. This was Scholarship. Livingstone learned from Herschel and Trench, and from their Master, and went out to break the bonds of the slave, to illumine the dark continent, to "heal the open sore of the world." This was Philanthropy. Take from these men what Christ and Christianity directly gave to them, and something remains; but not an ample knowledge, not an accurate scholarship, not the brave life which makes that central grave a shrine. They entered into life by the door which God had opened and they saw the things which are beyond the portal. Through the opened door passed the greatest of the three, the Scotch missionary, longing for service, intrepid, faithful: to whom the end came as he knelt in an African's hut, and threw his arms upon the bed before him, and talked with God, and entered into light while the candle at his side glimmered in the

loneliness. He passed through the door and walked in paradise.

Oh my brothers, it is this which makes life! Why should we halt when every great voice calls us on? Take all of good which is offered you. But pass on, beyond all which men can say, into that broader world of truth and duty, where God Himself bears rule. "Behold," He saith, "Behold, I have set before thee a door opened."

II

THE THRONE OF GRACE

HEBREWS iv. 16

THE THRONE OF GRACE

THE "throne of grace" is an expression less familiar to us than it was to our fathers. It is peculiar and full of meaning. The two principal words are not commonly associated. A throne is a place of authority which is to be obeyed. Grace is favor which is to be received. Duty is usually thought to be distinct from privilege, except as privileges are duties, and opportunities bring obligation. All language is inadequate to the description of God. Certainly any king that we know is a poor representative of the Lord of the whole earth; while grace, standing by itself, gives an incomplete idea of his attitude toward men. The Lord reigneth, and his throne is from everlasting to everlasting. Its authority is founded upon its righteousness. The grace is an important addition to the throne. It adds nothing to God's purpose, which is from the beginning, but it expresses the fulfillment of his intent in the act of redemption. The Eternal Love becomes the Incarnation, and thus extends to men the fullness of its blessing.

To come to the "throne of grace" is to come to God who has loved us, and has come to us that He might bring us to himself.

Herein is a revelation. We clearly discern the eternal compassion which comes into the world to seek and to save. We have seen the grace here; its name upon the earth is Christ. He is the grace of God. Now unchanged He is enthroned, and because of this the throne of heaven is the throne of grace. Men came to Him boldly when He was upon the earth, bringing their varied wants, and none of them were sent empty away. His power was always one with his mercy, and He gave what men needed to receive, crowning all his compassion by giving himself to the world He loved. It was in this beneficence and holding this compassion that He ascended to heaven, where He ever liveth to give grace to those who come to Him, to help them in their time of need. We have a vivid presentation of this when Stephen, waiting in the presence of death, looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and as they stoned him, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" This is the illustration of the words of the unknown writer: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need."

But it is to the “ throne of grace ” that we are to come. The place is distinct. It is not a throne, or the throne of heaven, or the throne of Jehovah which is presented to us, but the “ throne of grace.” The confidence which should bring us to the throne in boldness is not confidence merely in the goodness of God and his general interest in men, and his eternal affection for them, but it is confidence in God, who has in a distinct way made his compassion known, and made it effective to meet all the wants which are presented to Him ; for it pleases Him to make known his love most clearly, and to reveal his mercy most plainly, and to help men most fully through Him in whom He came into the world. It should not need to be repeated that there is no change in himself, but only this out-reaching of his compassion. What He may do for men who do not know this coming of God to the world, or for those who, knowing it, pass it by that they may come to Him without regard to his coming to them, no one can say. The uncovenanted mercies are neither to be described nor determined. This we know, that He has come to us in his Son, in whom the eternal compassion accomplishes its intent, so that his throne becomes the “ throne of grace,” that is, the throne of Christ ; and they who come to the “ throne of grace ” find the eternal mercy in its highest revelation and in its di-

vinest thought of man. Let me give a very crude illustration of this: In talking with a sea-captain a few weeks ago, he told me of a fearful disaster which befell his ship and made her helpless in mid-ocean, and imperiled all the lives which were in his care. He did all that he could do for them, and for the ship. He knew that he needed to be helped. He searched the horizon if anywhere he might see a passing ship. One came in sight, but went on its way, regardless of his signals. With deepened anxiety he looked again, and all who were with him looked. Another ship appeared. Again the signals were thrown up, but for a time they were unheeded. Presently the distant ship turned and began to approach the wreck. Then they knew that they were saved. There was no change in the ship or in the man who governed it. The only change was that she had turned to the men who needed her and who had cried out for her succor. She was the same ship, but in the act of turning she became the ship of grace. Do not press my poor story too far; but God has turned to us, in his eternal love He has come to us, and in this coming his grace becomes real, mighty to save, and the throne of the Eternal is made the "throne of grace." Well may we heed the simple teaching of a man whose name we do not know, and "come boldly unto the throne, unto the throne of grace,

that we may find grace to help us in our time of need."

I do not wish to enter upon any consideration of the relation between the Father in heaven and the Son of man. Many things might be said, but I leave them for the present. Yet this practical truth should be clear in our thought and constant in our action, that the love of God is at its best in his grace, and that his grace is in his Son, who loved us and gave himself for us. So that evidently, if we would come to the grace of God for help, the shortest and plainest way is the way that leads us to Christ, who is the grace, where to our mind and heart God is nearer than anywhere beside.

It is evident that we are always in need of help. This is in the very construction of our being. It is not power alone we need, it is help; which does not come to lessen our work, but to enlarge and exalt our strength. As civilization advances, dependence upon others is more manifest. The savage easily fashions a hut for himself, but when he has risen in intelligence he needs the architect and builder, and many men who shall make his house complete. His form of government is simple and easily administered; as he rises government becomes more intricate and his system of finance more inexplicable. Hence we find everywhere spe-

cialists, men who work on extended but attenuated lines. Under this system every man becomes the helper of others, and every man needs to receive an assistance which balances that which he bestows. So that we may say that dependence is the basis of advance, and that to do our best work and make the most of life we must be helped. It is natural to say this in the presence of students, who by the very fact of their being here confess themselves unequal to the life to which they aspire. They look to older men and wiser men, saying: "We wish to do our work in the world, but we do not know enough. We are not strong enough. Tell us what you know. Teach us your methods. Inspire us with the vigor of your lives." This dependence will remain so long as they continue to do good work in the world. We might define man as a person who must be helped. This rule is too evident and too common to be limited. We come very early where we need more than the help of our fellows. We need the help of God. He gives us our natural powers. He sustains them, as the sun sustains the light; for if the light parted from the sun it would lose itself. Light cannot be left at your door every morning, as the tradesman leaves his wares, but must be continually shining upon your path and into your house, or you will lose it all. If you doubt this, some day when your

room is very bright close all the shutters and try to keep the light as the winter's supply of illumination. In ceasing to be helped, you will cease to possess what you have received before. God must be continually giving to us. Life is ordered upon this plan. Our constitution shows this need. The Holy Scriptures declare it. It has the manifest advantage of keeping our minds gratefully and trustfully upon God. As our mutual dependence fosters friendship and affection, makes society possible and pleasant, so does our dependence upon God promote and enrich our spiritual life. We can never think of God as in any sense dependent, except as He may choose to be. Yet in a very real way He does depend upon us and employ us. When He wants his child nurtured and instructed, He places him in the care of a father and mother who will be glad to do this for Him. He gives his teaching through the lives of men ; He proclaims his loving-kindness, not by angels descending from heaven, but by men and women who go into all the world proclaiming the good news of God. Thus, while making use of us, He carries his love the further, and allows us to call upon Him for his assistance, not to remove our work, but to enable us to do it and to accomplish the purpose of our being. It is this desire to help us because He loves us which brings into the world the divine grace which

we name Christ, who does not come to conceal the Father, but to reveal Him; who is not here to compel us, but to assist us; who indeed brings fullness of rest and strength, but who offers these to all who come to Him, who in the coming shall find grace to help. There is an evident advantage in having the grace of God thus clearly manifested to us, for we know Christ. We have seen Him. We have looked day by day upon his helpfulness. We know the method and the spirit of his kindness, and when we come to Him we come boldly, because it is not to a stranger, but to one whose good will has been proved to the uttermost, and who has taken to himself the fullest power and right to help us to the largest blessings of the love of God. We come to Him, then, and, coming, find the eternal grace. He taught us that this was his place. More than any other He seemed to disown himself; He said He could do nothing apart from the Father who had sent him; that his life was only to do the Father's will. This was so complete that He spoke the words which have sometimes confused while they should always convince, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He taught us to come to Him for the divine blessing. He claimed the authority to teach, and in all ways to help. He said the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment

to the Son ; that men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He saw in the temple men who had exhausted the power of their religion to help them, and on the great day of the feast He cried, "Come unto me. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He made that sublime declaration, "I give unto men eternal life." He paraphrased the twenty-third Psalm, which He had learned at his mother's knee, when she interested Him by telling Him it was his grandfather's hymn. It was after this manner that He repeated it: "I am the Good Shepherd, ye shall not want. I will make you to lie down in green pastures. I will lead you beside the still waters. Yea, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you need fear no evil, for I am with you. My rod and my staff shall comfort you." He even added what had not entered into the thought of the first Psalmist, the promise which exalts and glorifies the Psalm, "I will give my life for the sheep." He let men come to Him and remain there. I believe that He never pointed men away from himself. When a young man asked Him what he should do to have eternal life He answered, "Come, follow me." When a man was dying at his side, bewildered by the pains of crucifixion, appalled at the future opening before him, and turned to Him for help, He let the dying man commit himself to

his compassion : "I shall be in Paradise to-day, and you shall be with me." He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." Only He could say these things. When a man in his fear came to the apostle in the prison, and prayed to be told what he must do to be saved, St. Paul pointed him to One who is able to save men. If Christ had been there He would have pointed him to no one. He would have drawn him to himself, and saved him there. We may wonder what would have happened if those who came to Christ had passed Him by and sought the more distant help, if the ruler whose daughter was nigh to death, and dead, had prayed to the God of Abraham for her life ; if the sailors in their sinking boat had cried to Him who holds the sea in the hollow of his hand ; if the blind man had turned his sightless eyes towards the sun crying for light ; if the sisters of Bethany had prayed to God in his high heaven. We do not know what the result would have been ; but this we know, that the prayer to Him restored the girl to her home, quieted the storm, saved the ship, gave sight to a man born blind, brought the Resurrection and the Life to those who loved Him.

Can we not learn the way of the divine help, and see that it does not stand aloof from us, but comes nigh to our door ; that we have not to seek it as if

it were far away, but to receive it as it comes seeking and saving us; for our seeking is but receiving? We call upon Him when He is near and here where we stand, where we kneel, we find that He will abundantly pardon. We are indeed told to ask, to seek, to knock, but his asking is before ours, and because of his call upon us, we call upon Him. We knock at his door, but there is another word: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." To hear his voice and open the door is to bring Him in, where He will sup with us and we shall sup with Him. We cannot feel deeply enough how strongly and constantly, with what passion and desire, with what importunity of love, He longs to help us in our life. Why should any one forget this, or refusing to see how truly He comes to us in his Son, who has all authority to bless us in the name of God, out of his own unsearchable riches, address himself to the King, eternal, almighty, invisible, who from his throne governs the universe? He is nearer to us than that. He is more than king; He is our Father. He is more than our Father in heaven; He is our Father upon the earth. He is more than help; He is "a very present help," and He stands in the greatness of his affection, stands so near to us that our whisper can reach his ear, that our outstretched hand can fall into the hand of almighty strength and everlasting love.

I speak lightly of no man's religion. It is too sacred. But to me the most pitiful thing which is known by that name would be to see a man who has looked upon Christ our Saviour, who has heard his words, who has marked his compassion, who has felt the glory and the sweetness of his presence, pass Him by to find elsewhere the help which He came to bring, and lived and died to make possible for us. We cannot do so. We know that life of mercy. We are familiar with that face radiant with its kindness. The tones of the voice linger upon the ear, "Come unto me, all ye that are in need; come unto me." And the bidding would detain us, if we had the heart to pass Him by. We come to Him. We come boldly, for we are certain of his care for us. We come boldly, for He invites us, and we have known, and those whom we honor most have known how true it is that He is strong to bless. We come boldly, whatever be our want. Hungry and athirst, we call upon Him. Weary, we rest in Him. Uncertain, we confide in his wisdom. With our vision dimmed, we walk in his light. Sorrowful, we ask his solace. Sinful, we pray for his mercy. Living, we draw from Him our life. Dying, we are quiet in his resurrection, and in his gift of eternal life is immortality. We find grace, timely grace, grace for this world in its common ways and common wants; grace for this day with its real neces-

sities and opportunities. We come to Him boldly, trustingly, constantly ; we wait with Him, content that eye and heart shall remain with Him. We are willing that life with all its changes shall reach us through his compassion, and that eternity, with all its solemnity, shall find us resting content in his redeeming love and in his exceeding great and precious promises. We trust Him steadfastly to the end. This is our confidence. We stay with Him. We mark the divine love in Him. We find all things that we need in Him, and at the throne of grace, which is the throne of Christ, we obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.

III

THE ROYAL BOUNTY

1 KINGS x. 13

THE ROYAL BOUNTY

THE Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. She was amazed at all that she heard, and delighted with all that she saw, and confessed that after the generous rumors that had reached her in her distant home the half had not been told her. She brought her present to him, as was the custom of the times; and when she went away she asked a gift of him, and history says that the king gave her all that she desired; and that, having given her everything of which she had thought, he added something more of his own thought. He gave her this, not because she had desired it, but because he had desired it; not for her heart's seeking, but out of his heart's wishing to bestow. This is the simple record: "And King Solomon gave to the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." These last words describe the added gift, and this was doubtless the best of all; that upon which she would think with the greatest pleasure, and of

which she would speak with the greatest pride. The word "royal" is well chosen, for we think of something which is great when we apply this term to it, as we speak of a royal deed, royal magnificence, royal benevolence, royal bounty. We readily approve the action of the king, for it is this excess of giving, beyond that which is demanded of us, which makes the real generosity. We are in the habit ourselves, so far as we are generous at all, of reaching beyond the real necessities and requests of our friends, and giving out of the largeness of our hearts. There is something in the fruit which we admire which is more than fruit, and it is this excess which commands the high price. It is the added, extraordinary beauty of a painting which enhances its worth. Some pictures are sold by the square yard, and some by the inch. It is that which genius adds which is the royal bounty. It marks the difference between genius and talent. To be what we must, and to do what we must, is narrow and uninteresting. The man who is just, and no more, wins our praise for his integrity, but not our regard for his liberality. There are some men who would on no account have their measures in the slightest degree too small, but would be quite as careful not to have them too large. There is no reason why justice should not be combined with charity, and a strict regard for the legal demands

which are made upon us with the excess out of a free heart which will make our justice beautiful. I saw in a fine country town a tall, graceful tree which cast its pleasant shade upon the path, and I marked that men had fastened upon it an iron frame which held a lamp that gave out its light upon the path. The tree was not the less a tree that it added the light, and the lamp was not less a lamp because it belonged to the tree. I came afterward and found that the bark of the tree had grown up around the iron where it was fastened to it, till the frame and the lamp were fairly incorporated in the tree itself. It is easy thus to enlarge our life, adding beauty to strength, giving what our heart desires to give to that which Sheba asks at our hands. This thought is strongly expressed by St. Paul, "Scarcely for a righteous man," the man who does exactly what he ought to do, and nothing more, "will one die." Yet peradventure, for a good man, who does all he ought to do, and adds something because he wants to do it, some would even give their life. This man appeals to our heart which is ready to respond. The best things are indeed only to be given in this way. They cannot be bought. They cannot be had for the asking; such things as confidence, and friendship, and courtesy, which no statute can demand, but which the royal heart delights to give; and there is a

like royalty which is able to receive and prize the gift.

This is God's way, to whom all life is but the expression of his heart. We rejoice continually in his bountiful goodness. What is the need of flowers? He could have made a strong and honest earth which would take in the seed and give it out in harvest, and thus we could live; but when He had made the earth substantial, useful as it is, He added flowers, because He wished to give them, was delighted to look upon them, and knew how happy we should be who saw them blossom by the roadside. There is no need of birds. The world would go its way, the seasons would follow one another, the sun would rise and set, the forest trees would reach up toward the clouds, without them. God made all this, and then filled the quiet woods with forms of beauty, and changed silence into song. Even heaven itself has more than we should have looked for or asked for. We might have had a good, delightful heaven, without pain or sorrow or sighing, without death, and such a heaven we have. But in the vision of the Apocalypse, which only dimly sees the heavenly reality, its streets are covered with gold, as it were transparent glass; its gates are pearl, and the strong walls, which cannot be moved, glisten with jewels. So it might have been with the arrangement of this world. We

might have had men to care for us, women to nurture us, fathers to work for us, a society whose process might move on with industry and safety from year to year. But God has added the richer delights of love and sympathy, of all that we name friend and friendship. It is in the same way that He frames his ordinances for us. We could have had all days alike, but when He had made six good days He added a seventh which should be wearied by no work, wherein the soul should be at leisure to live with itself in quietness, and worship God. He might have supplied all our wants in the course of nature, bringing his gifts to our door with regularity, and we should have lived our appointed time; but He does more than this. He lets us thank Him when we take our daily bread, and blesses the bread with the love which gives it. He even lets us tell Him what we wish, and to our wishes He gives patient heed. He might have left us to conscience and experience, in the light of nature to frame our character and our hope, but to these He has added the thought of other men, the revelation of his wisdom by his saints, the gift of his spirit to our spirit, to be in us a continual light.

There is a very good expression of God's way of dealing with us in a line of the twenty-third Psalm, "My cup runneth over." This seems un-

necessary. To have the cup full, or a little less than full, is enough for us, and more convenient. For us, but not for God, who delights in filling it; and when we bid Him stay his hand, He keeps on pouring, and the water flows, till, presently, the cup is overflowing, not because we thought to have it so, but because of his great delight in giving; until it would seem as if He could not stop, or content himself with that which He has already bestowed upon us. Let this stand as a simple expression of his way with us.

When we come upon anything that all good men approve, we may be very certain that we have found something which God himself approves, and which is in the method of his life. We like, among ourselves, this principle of the cup that runneth over. Our liking for it we have inherited from God. We might expect, therefore, that when the Son of God has his life in the world He will live by this rule, which is of heaven and of earth; and it is even so. His first miracle would seem unnecessary. There have been people who blindly but honestly wished that He had never wrought it. Why did He do it if there was no need of it, if it were even possible that it should be wrested from its meaning? He had gone as a guest to a wedding, perhaps because the bride was his friend, and there came that grave calamity which would

mar the feast; for presently it was whispered to Him, "They have no wine." Surely they could have a wedding without wine. Not that wedding. Not in the custom of that time. He knew that the bride, if she lived to be old, would never recover from the shame of her wedding-day, whose beauty was lost. Here was a necessity, in love, in kindness; and that the cheeks of this girl might not redden with shame, He reddened the water into wine.

He was at Capernaum. They brought to him a man sick with the palsy. They broke up the roof, and lowered him to the feet of Jesus, who knew well what they wanted. He passed over the little thing which they sought, and, governed by his own feeling, not by theirs, he said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are sent away from thee." That was enough. In a few days, the man would be able to walk without his help. Death comes to the succor of cripples. The man gave no sign of discontent, but Jesus found that the friends were unsatisfied, and He thought within himself, "You brought him here that he might be raised up, and be made able to carry his bed home. I have done a greater thing for him, but I will add this which you want." "Arise," He said, "take up your bed and go your way." He did the greater work which made the soul strong, and for the lesser work, —

well, He threw that in. It was the royal bounty. There was a time later than that, after his Resurrection, when some of his disciples had toiled all the night upon the sea, and had taken nothing. He could not have it a fruitless night for them. In the morning He was there, their risen Saviour, who might well bestow some spiritual gift becoming to the Resurrection. This He did, but He said, "Cast your net on the right side of the ship, and you will find what you have been seeking." They cast it, therefore, and drew it in, full of fishes, a hundred and fifty and three. This is the record of a fisherman, who wrote that the fish were large ; and of an old man, who remembered the number of them. They drew their net to shore, and there was a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, another fish. When they had enough, one that was better than all was added. Have you not sometimes wished that you could have had that hundred and fifty-fourth fish ? This was Christ's way all the while, and is his way still. He fills the net as full as it will hold, that our life may be sustained, and then He adds more, that his love may be gratified, and that which He adds is the "royal bounty."

The work of our Lord was not merely in meeting the wants of men, but in creating the wants ; not in gratifying their great desires, but in making their desires great. His own work in the world

was twofold: to teach men how much more there was which they could enjoy, and how much more there was which He was eager to impart. The greater the desire, the surer it was that it would be met by his desire. Indeed, a large desire is necessary to wealth. We must look out toward that wherein our riches lie. "He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies must send out the wealth of the Indies." To him whose desires are allowed liberty there comes the answer of fulfillment from "the unsearchable riches of Christ." In all his life and in all his teachings we see vastly more than men ever asked, much more than they are willing to take even to-day. It has often been, as it was at the first, that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not;" but to those who received Him He gave all they wished, and more than they had thought; He gave the right to become the sons of God. They would have been content with a greater prophet, a bolder leader, a stronger king, a Messiah who should enthrone Israel and bring the nations in homage to its feet. He came bringing God to the world, giving an eternal liberty, erecting an everlasting kingdom. They wanted manna; He gave the Bread of Life. They wanted wells of water; He gave the well that should be within them, springing up for evermore. They wanted a leader; He gave a Saviour. They

wanted man ; and He was God. This has continued even to our time. Many admire Christ because He was a teacher, neglecting that wherein He was infinitely more than teacher. They are glad of an example ; He was that, but, far beyond it, He was the life whereby righteousness became possible. There are those who would be content with his beautiful spirit, his blameless life, his deeds of charity, his patience, his submission, his consent to a death which He could not avoid. He offers to the world the spirit of the Eternal, the life of God to be lived upon the earth ; He lays down the life which no man could take from him ; and, with all the roads leading from Jerusalem open before Him, walks with determined step to Calvary and the Cross. Beyond that which has contented many in the world, He gave himself, the world's Redeemer, the Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep.

It is very, very sad to mark how ready we are to measure Christ's gifts to us by our narrow wants and limited desires ; not by the greatness of his love, not by his exhaustless riches, not by the fullness of the grace of the Eternal, who is the Father and friend of all men. If ever we shall pass beyond the gratifying of ourselves, and allow Christ to gratify himself in blessing us, we shall find in a glad experience what the simple words mean, " I am

come that they might have life" — Oh, friends, do not stop there, finish the sentence, — "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." We ask life of Him, and He gives us life, and offers length of days forever and forever. We pray that we may live; and we set up a goal at seventy or ninety years, when He draws no line across our path. "I give eternal life," He says. We pray for help that we may live; He offers more than that in the unrivaled sentence, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We think of life as being, and are content. We use existence as a synonym of living, but He said, "This is eternal life, to know God, and me."

So for ourselves; we are to live as his disciples. We wish to be true, useful, and generous. We wish to do in small measure such things as He did, — in his name to give the cup of water, and the healing of the sick. He grants all that we desire, then speaks out of his own heart, and his desire, "The works that I do shall ye do, and greater works than these;" for the miracles which attract us or baffle us, which draw us to his love, or possibly turn us from his word, which are only miracles because they are strange to us, are to be exceeded in the things which we do, when by our teaching we open the eyes of men that they

may see God, and lift them up to the ways of holy living, and raise them from being into life. Our visions of heaven in our reverent imagination, even in the exultant words of the Revelation, are not equal to the simple truths which He taught, and men learned to repeat after Him. For what are golden streets and jeweled walls beside that which he meant, "In my Father's house are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you." "Ye shall behold my glory." "Ye shall be loved as I am loved." The thought of Christ far outruns the aspiration of the world, as it comes to us from the lips of that disciple whom Jesus loved, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him even as He is."

What do we need, then? To enlarge our desires! Yes, but to consent to God's desires. To wish for more, but to consent to be blessed as Christ longs to bless us. We must know the methods of God, whose will to give is greater and more constant than our will to receive. We must adjust our life to God's desire. Faith is the compact of the soul with God, rather than with itself. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," is a promise ever old and ever new. We must be firm enough and aspiring enough to hold the cup after it has begun to overflow, and to let God's hand pour the water of life as long as He will, for this

world and all the worlds that are to be. If we could desire more, if we could ascend to God's desire for us, life would be transfigured.

“The balsam, the wine, of predestinate wills
Is a jubilant longing and pining for God.”

“God loves to be longed for, He loves to be sought,
For He sought us himself, with such longing and love.”

We wish now to take this method for our own in all our dealing with God. Our sense of what is right, the voice of conscience, the commands of Scripture, call us to our duty. Let us do what they require till conscience is satisfied; but let us add to this more than a rigid obedience asks for, all that a loving heart, grateful and generous, wishes to bestow. The little questions of life, small matters of casuistry, minute affairs of conduct, would be quite readily determined if we would live by this rule, wherewith God blesses us. That question which with unusual urgency now presses upon us, how we shall regard the Sabbath day, would not be difficult if it were our delight to remember it, and to keep it holy because it is our delight to please Him who has given to us its sacredness and blessedness. It is pitiful when we find ourselves questioning how much of the day should be holy; how much of it should be given to the thought of God and the divine life; how much of it we should yield to the holy spirit

of truth; how many of the hours we should keep in the remembrance of Him whose Resurrection gives to the Sabbath its greater meaning. We should keep the Sabbath holy as if we desired to keep it holy. All its hours should be sacred. They need not be less joyous, less friendly, for being holy; and we cannot be gratified with the spirit in which we find ourselves trying to divide the time. Keep twenty-four hours for God, and if by any means you can make the time overflow add a twenty-fifth hour.

We question again about money. What proportion of our property should we devote to God? The Jews said one tenth. Can we do no better, after so long a time? Let us give the whole, and if by any means we can compass it, let us add another tenth, simply to show what a delight it is to give all things to Him, and to let Him make the allotment in his care for us, and for our household, and for the church, and for the wide world that we are living in. There are many who do this, and they learn how true is that word of Christ that is called to mind among the Acts of the Apostles, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Thus, in all things let us make the way of God our own, become his children entirely, receive the love of Christ in its fullness, make up our own life in his name, according to the largeness of his

thought. If we will consent to it, we can be great and rich and strong. It seems strange to say that we are not ready to be blessed, but of many it is true. They are not willing to be greatly blessed, to have the cup run over. They are willing to be useful, but not very useful. They ask to be set in his service, but when He takes their word and breathes his own desire into it, they shrink back. It is a very serious thing, if we are able to perceive it, to consent that God should bless us as He pleases, should have his own estimate of our character, his own measure of our powers, his own vision of our accomplishment, and should call us to greater service, to diviner employment, than we have ever dreamed of. It was a wise woman who said, "I have had to face my own prayers." We face our prayers when God gives his own wish to our words, and makes them large enough to hold his thoughts. It is one of the hardest things to believe, but one to which, in humbleness of mind and in a faith which will not falter, we should consent, — that high word of calling and consecration which Christ gave more than once, — "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you." Not our thought but his thought makes our calling, and the thought of God is the summons and the guidance of our life. Even so, even according to thy greatness, and thy

gentleness which makes men great; thine infinite purposes, and thine eternal grace; even so, O Lord of mercy and of truth, send us into the world!

As we close these thoughts, let us remember that promise which comes at the close of the Old Testament, which almost seems to reverse the promise at the beginning of the Old Testament, "I will never open the windows of heaven and pour out a flood again;" for the last of the prophets brings to us the word of God, that He will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a flood again. It shall not come to destroy, but to preserve; it shall create life; it shall enlarge life, but it shall be after the measure of his will, not ours. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Not drops here and there, but showers of blessing. Not running brooks, but broad rivers. Not pools of water, but a shoreless sea; deep, deep waters, when, looking up into the Infinite Love, and consenting to be blessed of God as God would bless us, we bring all the tithes into the storehouse and the remainder of the tithes, if any have been left. "I will pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Not room enough to receive it; that is the royal bounty.

IV

THE CHIEF POINT

HEBREWS viii. 1

THE CHIEF POINT

THERE was a chief point in what the Apostle said. It was not a collection of words, good words, religious words, but there was a centre about which they formed themselves, which gave to them their character and their value. What he really said was, The head is this. What the head is to the body, — giving to it wisdom and force and life, so that if the head is removed the body has no worth, — that the meaning of the words is to them. He has been speaking of the temple, the priest, the sacrifice, and now he suddenly stops, and says, “I do not mean these things which I have brought to your mind, but I mean the heavenly temple, the great High Priest, the one eternal Sacrifice. Unless you apprehend this, the words which I have spoken may be of no benefit to you.”

It is so in most things. Truth and life need to be embodied. As gold is in quartz, so truth is in words, feeling in act, reverence in worship, love in service. The spirit must be clothed in flesh. We need the skill to discern the real in the formal, to

look through the things which are seen and temporal and to find the unseen and the eternal. It is in this gift of discernment that men greatly differ, some regarding only the outward; some caring little for that, except as it holds the reality which they prize. We may see this in very many places. Thus, in regard to money. This is not silver and gold, and property does not consist in houses and land; but the value of wealth is in the life which it contains and in the high uses to which it can be put. Our Lord himself stated this very clearly when He said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," and in his other words, in which He instructed us to lay up our treasure in heaven, where its spiritual value alone can be invested. It is for want of the discernment to see this that so many who have an abundance of things are in poverty, while so many who have a scarcity of things have a permanent wealth. We may see the same truth, as has been already suggested, in words, whose value is not in their letters and syllables, but in the thought which has been thus expressed. As a book is not to be judged by its binding, so it is not to be judged by its sentences, and no one has taken the value of a book who has not taken into his mind the thought which it both conceals and reveals. Clearly it is not reading many books, but

getting much truth from books, which makes men wise. The worth of a creed is not in its statements, but in the spirit and life which it contains and gives forth to be the spirit and life of those who receive it. Even the Bible itself has not its worth in that which the eye can see, or the lips can repeat. It is not in reading many chapters, or in holding the Sacred Book for many hours, that one gets real profit from it, but in walking by the light which it gives, fashioning the thought by the truth which it teaches, comforting one's self with its solace, and encouraging one's heart with its promises. "The words that I speak unto you," said the Living Truth, "they are spirit, and they are life." Again, the Sacraments which the church offers have not their profit in the forms in which they come to us. Baptism, while it uses the water, has its worth in the bestowment of spirit in spirit; and in the Holy Eucharist we are to see more than the bread and the cup, even the life of the body which was broken for us, and of the blood which was shed for our redemption.

Life itself does not consist in breathing, nor in length of days, nor in largeness of work; but life is in the spirit which animates it, in the purpose which governs it, in the truth for which it stands, in the influence which it exerts and bequeaths. Hence, a great life can be expressed in very few

words. Indeed, a life can hardly be said to be very large unless the record of it can be brief. The recital of its events may fill volumes, but the record of its intent lies within the compass of a sentence. If I speak to you certain names, the whole man comes before you, not indeed with the date of his birth or the time of his death, but with that for which he cared, and to which he was devoted. I say "George Washington," and instantly you think of him who was first in the hearts of his countrymen. I say "Samuel Armstrong," and at once you look upon the soldier and statesman whose life cannot be removed from the well-being of the republic which he greatly served.

Experience has different forms, but the purpose of it as our Heavenly Father gives it to us is one. In its form it may be bright or dark, and those looking at the outside of it may call it adversity or prosperity, and we ourselves may give thanks for it, or pray for grace to submit to it; but in all forms it means our spiritual good. It may add to the things which we possess, or it may take them away, but it is the adapting of the wisdom of God to our condition, and for the results which He desires to secure. So St. James teaches the man of low degree to rejoice when he is exalted, and the man of high degree to rejoice when he is brought low. But these different directions which Provi-

dence takes are meant to bring men to the same point, — as one who is east of a place must come west to meet a man who from the west must come east to meet him. It is not of much moral advantage to make a rich man richer, or a poor man poorer; but change, wisely conducted, may work in us the perfecting of character which all men should desire. What we need, then, in the changes of life, is the wisdom to look through them, to find what they mean, and to take that for our possession.

One more thing may be mentioned in the same connection; that is, work. Work is in very many forms. It requires a diversity of talent and a diversity of occupation. The professions of life have great variety. Work is to be judged, therefore, not by its name or by its shape, but by the design which we carry into it. A work which is ranked as one of high dignity may be lacking in dignity if it be done from an unworthy purpose, while the humblest occupation which we enter upon with a large design will be exalted. A work done from a selfish motive is selfish work, no matter what its form may be. It is thus that God judges. It is thus that men judge. We pay highest honor to usefulness, and only to usefulness have we thus far builded monuments; while highest of all, and alone worthy of us, is the intent expressed in the words of St. Paul, “Whether, therefore, ye eat or

drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." There are diversities of operation, he said, but one spirit. He had high precedent for this opinion, when he recalled that to the great workmen of the church of God inspiration was given for whatever needed to be done. Moses was inspired to be the law-giver; Aaron, the priest; Joshua, the soldier; Bezaleel, to work in gold and in brass; and Aholiab in fine-twined linen. It is in this way that we are to estimate our occupation, — for what am I working, and what spirit animates my life? What will be left when I have deserted my office, my shop, my house, and with nothing in my hands have gone on to the Great Day?

It were very easy to prolong these thoughts; but let us go out among the worlds which are around us. It is a great world that we live in, which God has given into our keeping, yet is it small before the worlds which shine in the heavens above us, which have their brightness far beyond the reach of our eyes, in the spaces we cannot measure even with our thought. But what are the worlds, and what do they mean, and what is their worth? Are they simply nebulous dust, compacted into stars, or into planets which circle around their central suns? Is there nothing in them which the eye has not seen, which the optic glass has not discovered, yet which can be seen as we take our evening walks as

truly as when we range the heavens with our telescope? It was a wise astronomer who, keeping watch over his flocks by night, looked up into the skies, and saw the shining worlds, and saw through them into the life and thought which gave them being and beauty. So he sang, in words in which we still delight, of that which was within the stars, and within the light which came silently down upon the meadow. "The heavens declare the glory of God," and the glory of the heavens was the presence of God, and he who had not seen this had seen but the outside of the stars. It were better a thousand times that one should know that the stars which he can see reveal the wisdom of God, than that, not seeing this, he should be able to call all the stars by their names, and to mark their courses, binding the bands of Orion, and sending through the quiet air the sweet influences of the Pleiades. Beholding the presence of God in the order of the heavens, that shepherd-astronomer saw the same orderly method and wise design in the laws which govern men and mark out their ways, until at length he was able to pray that he himself might be as wisely governed as the heavens were. "Let the words of my mouth be as obedient as the planets, and the meditation of my heart as pure as the light of the stars." This was astronomy indeed. The chief point of the heavens, God; the chief point of

the law of God, in the heavens or upon the earth, the obedience of men.

If now, drawing down our gaze, we look around us upon men, we see the forms of them, we dissect their powers, we study their actions, we listen to their language, we imagine their destiny. But of late we have come to think very much of their origin, from what they sprang, through what forms of life by slow approaches they have come to be men, the crowning work of God upon the earth. It is an exceedingly interesting study, and we cannot wonder that we have become fascinated with it. But after all, what is the chief point of it? We have found, we say, even now we have found, how man has come to be the man, and we trace his kinship to the world of life which from the smallest form has risen to its loftiest estate. But what is the chief point of it? After all, standing delighted in our new opinions, what is a man? Surely, not anything we see, not that which is born, and moves about the streets, and wakes, and sleeps, and dies, and goes back to the earth out of which it came. That is not man. The chief point of man is in his spirit, in his soul, in his power to think, to love, to hold fellowship with himself and with other men, and with the Maker of all men. The chief point of man is the breath of the Eternal which has made him man. The narrative which we read is very

realistic in its portrayal. In a very simple form, in a picture which is little more than an outline, the truth is presented to us, that the Creator has given to men of his own breath, till they live in the image and likeness of God. Whatever we know of a man, we do not know him until we know that by virtue of which, in whatever way he is related to other forms of life, he is more closely related to the Eternal Life which was in the beginning.

It is interesting to know our rise from forms below us, but it is of much greater moment to know that we have the life which is from above us.

“Love the inmate, not the room ;
The wearer, not the garb ; the plume
Of the falcon, not the bars
Which kept him from the splendid stars.”

More than this we are to know, that the spirit in which our divine life consists is sustained by the life of which it is a part, and is constantly reinforced by the inspiration of Him who has given us our being. Life is continually to advance, to increase in power, in aspiration, in accomplishment. At last it will become so great that this body which surrounds it is no longer large enough and will disappear, while the life will go forth in some new and freer form, to live forever. Certainly, it cannot be for very long that our enlarging life can be content with these limits which suffice for

seventy years. We cannot always spare a third of our time for sleep, or consent to the infirmities of age, when "they that look out of the windows are darkened." Very beautifully did St. Paul describe this in words whose meaning we are reluctant to perceive. He seems to have viewed man as living in a house of snow. What other house could it be which would dissolve? Where had he seen snow, unless it were upon the heights of Hermon, where it lingers through the year? Though this tent that we are dwelling in upon the earth shall melt away, when it has melted away, we have another house to follow it. It brings up the play of our boyhood, when we raised our houses of snow, and sat within them; but they were cold, they were narrow, we could move but a step and we touched the walls. After a time the house melted, but the boy was left out on the open field where he had room enough; the house had melted, not the boy. Day by day this is going on around us, yet we do not rejoice in the new liberty, the larger room to live in. We call it by sad names. We set it in sombre symbols. It is not strange. Affection is strong and tender, and we need the companionship of those we love, and the world is never the same when they have gone out of it. Let us speak gently of our natural and sacred sorrows. Yet can we not rise, and even

through our tears see the chief point, the meaning of the dissolving of the house? God's angels come by two and two. To the child of God the Angel of Death comes in company with the Angel of Life. Sometimes we open the door and Death comes in. We close it quickly, leaving the other without. The dark form sits beside the hearth and makes the room silent and sad, while Immortality waits upon the outer steps. Perchance, presently, we open the door again and let him come in. He brings the intent of God, and we are comforted. In the thought of God the chief point of death is immortality. The whole tone of the New Testament teaching is like this. The life advances steadily; at length, in an hour it breaks away and is free. The victory is won. The trumpets sound, and in the glorified body the immortal spirit walks with God.

It is the great sorrow of our heart, its great burden, that we have so often failed to see the chief point of our life. Whatever, wherever its years may be, it is meant that the likeness of God which was created shall be the likeness of God in our endless way; that the thought of God shall be forever the thought of the man, and that he shall live like his Maker, in righteousness and love. We have no higher word than godliness. To be like God in our intention, our will, our

deed, is the highest attainment which life can achieve. But this we have not reached. The consciousness which saddens us, the vision which every day accosts us as we walk abroad, the daily knowledge of the world we live in, the refrain of history for weary centuries, remind us that godliness has not been preserved; that is, that the meaning of life has been lost, that its chief point has been missed. Shall it always be so? It is Christ himself who answers our inquiry, giving new spirit and form to the promise which from the first has been the comfort of those who received it, and has been expressed in many ways. Let us recall this, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." The Son of God came into the world, the incarnate thought and love of God, to do away our past, to give to us once again the spirit of the beginning, to enable us to live our life once more, and to live it truly.

It is interesting to mark that the word which in the New Testament describes the course of men and one of the words which in the Old Testament describes it employ the same illustration. Both are taken from archery. When in the summer time, upon the broad lawn of a friend, the target is set up, and skilled hands are sending the arrows to the mark, you wish to show your skill. The bow is placed in your hands, the arrow flies, and the boy

across the field leaps out of the path of your wandering shaft. What is your first thought? "I want to try that again." What is the first thought of your friend? "Try again. You will do better next time." Now, that is what Christ is saying to us: "You have missed the mark; you know it, and I know it, but try again." It is this opportunity once again to reach the mark, the chief point of life, which He offers to us. Indeed, it would not be amiss to say that the gospel of Christ is the gospel of the second chance. Men have curiously wondered if there was a second chance in another world. There is something much better than that, a second chance in this world. You do not wish to wait until next summer to see if you can hit the shield then. You want to do it this afternoon; and it is with this word of immediate opportunity that the gospel is preached to us. "Now," cries our friend, the Great Archer, "now, is the accepted time to try again! Now is the day to hit the mark." So prominent was this teaching in our Lord's life, so constantly did He devote himself to men who had missed, that it was noticed by those who were opposed to Him, and presently they fixed it as a name upon Him, joining it to another name of reproach. They said He was the friend of publicans and men who had missed the mark, — for this was the word they used. He did not disown it.

He said, expressly, "I came not to call men who have been successful, but men who have failed." "To repentance," He said; that is, to a new opportunity. One day a man wished to see Him very much, but he was an unpopular man, and deservedly so, and no one would give way for him. He climbed a sycamore tree beneath which Jesus was to pass. He saw the man, called him down, and said He would go home with him, and as they went away together proud men who looked upon them said: "See there! He is going home to dine with a man who has missed the mark." It was quite true.

He told of two men both of whom had exercised themselves in archery, and that they came to give account of that which they had done. One stood erect and said, "I thank thee, God, that I have never failed. My arrow has always gone to the centre of the shield." Poor fool! He was sincere, I suppose, but the truth was his arrows had gone so far from the target he could not see where they had dropped. He supposed they had pierced the centre. The other bowed his head, and cried in piteous voice, "God be merciful to me, a man that has missed the mark!" And Jesus said, "I tell you this man went down to his house to try again, and the other did not." But best of all these incidents was another that he told of a young man who wished to go into a far country where

there was to be an archery meet. He wore his fine raiment; he carried his best bow; his heart was full of confidence. After a little he had lost his arrows, and lost his bow, and he came back. But as he came he thought within himself what he would say. "I will say, Father, before heaven, and in thy sight, I have missed the mark. Let me be as one of thy hired servants, to make bows and arrows for better men." But his father saw him, and interrupted his confession. "Bring out a bow and give it to him." The brother said, "But, father, he has had his bow, and missed the mark." "Bring out the best bow and give it to him. My boy has come back to try again."

This is Christ's word to us in this gospel of the second chance, wherein, for our advantage, "now is the accepted time." Christ has gained for us the right to try again. He gives to us new strength and true skill. In doing this He gives himself. Thus He brings to us success, life, eternal life. But how does He accomplish this? By his Incarnation. What is the Incarnation? It is the dwelling of God in a man. What it is no man can tell. We take gratefully the teaching of the apostle, that He who was in the form of God, retaining the divine nature, took on him the form of a servant and was made man. The Eternal Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, "full

of grace and truth." He who learns this has the chief point of the Incarnation.

He wrought out the redemption of the world. For this He lived and died and rose again. We rejoice in the Cross, whereby He has redeemed men; but where was the Cross raised? We cannot tell, certainly. On what day did He die? We say Friday, some say Thursday. On what tree was He crucified? Some have imagined it was an aspen tree, and that it is for this reason the leaf has trembled ever since. But we do not know. How, then, not knowing these things, can we glory in Christ and Him crucified? Because these are the forms; but the meaning of them is not concealed. The chief point is that He died for us.

In what way was this accomplished? How shall we explain to ourselves all that we name Atonement? Good men have reasoned differently about it. Theories have varied. In the combining of theories we come nearer to the truth; but when all are said and reasoned about, and we hold our different minds, still we can take to ourselves the power of the Atonement, if entering within all forms we see the chief point, that He is the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world; and He is the Good Shepherd, giving his life for the sheep. But how shall we come to

Him, and have the benefit of his redemption? Some are coming as children, drawn by their first thoughts to Him who took children in his arms and blessed them. Others come in the strength of manhood, with great purpose following Him; and some by a long and tiresome way, through the dark out into the light. Is there, then, no one way? The chief point of all ways is, coming; and he who rests in the redeeming love of Christ has found the chief point of his redeeming love. Life then may be long, and full of great events, the life of a prophet, an apostle; it may remain a child's life; or it may lead through simple, uneventful years; but it is the Christ-life if it be lived in the love of Him. That is the chief point.

We have missed, all of us have missed the chief point of life. Let us not miss the second time. Of what avail to try further, with the old spirit and the former skill which have disappointed us? Let Christ instruct us. Then shall we come with a new life, into a new life, till we reach his heaven where there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it; where there is no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof; where they that have followed Christ upon the earth shall follow Him whithersoever He goeth, and He shall lead them, and feed

them, and their blessedness shall be in the joy of the Lord ; where their glory shall be in his glory, and the highest prophecy of honor shall be fulfilled : they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is. In Him, — not in temple, not in golden streets, not in jeweled walls, not in gates of pearl, not in endless song and eternal rest, shall be the everlasting bliss, but in Him. The chief point of heaven is Christ. Let us not miss it. Try again, carefully, skillfully. Let us place our hand upon the bow underneath his hand, and our fingers around the string underneath his fingers. With his strength let us draw. Along the line of his light let us look. Then the arrow shall fly from his hand and ours, and it shall reach the mark.

V

THE COMFORTER, EVEN THE HOLY
SPIRIT

S. JOHN xiv. 26

THE COMFORTER, EVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT

WE are living in the time of the Holy Spirit, for God is Spirit, and in his spiritual presence He fills the world. To this we all assent readily. The Incarnation is a mystery which we cannot altogether define, although it is clearly taught and deeply felt; the presence of the Holy Spirit is as simple as the being of God. If God is here, within reach of our worship, and close enough to be our sun and shield, and good enough to be our exceeding great reward, it is in this manner of being, — that is, as spirit, and as the Holy Spirit. We need not, for our purpose at this time, examine the eternal nature of the divine being or seek to comprehend it in its eternal truth, as it is declared by our Lord in the words with which Christian baptism is sanctified; but only consider the method of the presence of God, as this was taught by our Lord, and especially in his last hours with his disciples. He declares it, repeats it, unfolds it again and again, that when He has left

the earth the Holy Spirit will come, and will carry forward the work in which He has laid down his life and which He has crowned with his Resurrection. To this end, it was expedient that He should go away. The world was to be enriched, not impoverished, by the withdrawal of himself. It was to have more of the divine presence and grace. His friends would see Him no longer, but they would perceive Him, feel his presence, receive his truth, and be endowed with his life as never before. To this teaching, so plainly and repeatedly bestowed, we should give instant heed, that the full blessing which the love of God has prepared may be upon us.

We cannot too often think that there is one God, and that God is one. This is the primal truth; and whatever within and beyond this truth is believed or questioned, this we must constantly affirm. This is the place for reverent knowledge, not for curious controversy. The sublimity and solemnity of the nature of God might well have united men in patience and in awe. But even the words of the Son of God have divided the minds of men, and kept them apart. The time may come when this will be accounted one of the curiosities of religious thought.

There are three periods, if this convenient expression may be used, in the presence of God

among men. First, He is spirit alone ; thus the prophets and psalmists knew Him. They looked upon his works and admired them. They heard his voice speaking to their hearts. They were confident of his guidance and help, but they did not see Him. In the second place, He was spirit as from the beginning, but He was incarnate, manifest in the flesh ; veiled, indeed, but yet so really to be recognized that our Lord said in words still beyond our thought, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In the third place, He is spirit as before, but without the form of man, which has arisen from the top of Olivet and vanished from sight, but with the addition of all which He has accomplished by the Incarnation. The eternal purpose is now fulfilled, and in this fulfillment we rejoice, living in this day which kings and prophets waited for. The oneness of this divine life and presence is asserted in the words so full of truth, if enriched with mystery, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." It is not very difficult to illustrate this, although it is only an illustration and suggestion which can be given. If our thought does not hesitate, our language must always falter when we speak of God. Yet it is not entirely beyond his children to have an apprehension of Him. A young man, full of a generous ambition, inspired

with a desire to fulfill the command of his Lord, longing to bring the world into his light and life, enters upon a course of study which will prepare him for this work. At length he leaves the school, retaining his purpose and desire, which have been increased by that which he has gained in the patient years which have given him the larger knowledge and ability required by the work to which he aspires. With this original desire and this acquired ability, he leaves his own country and goes to the end of the earth to be the apostle of the grace of God. I feel how very poor this is even as an illustration ; yet we are permitted to believe that, in order that the eternal love of God which regarded the necessity of the world should find men and be effectual to their redemption, it was needful that the divine mercy should receive what the life in the world would give, and that having taken this to itself the form in which it had been gained could be withdrawn, and in the spiritual presence and power the design of love and grace could be accomplished.

We have now the fullest revelation of God which has ever been given to the world, and we have God in the greatness of his power, with the purpose enlarged into the fulfillment. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of God ; that is, God, the Holy Spirit. He is here in the name of Christ, holding

the fact of the Incarnation and all which it has accomplished to complete the Redemption and make it effective in the life of men. "He shall glorify me; for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." In these terms He was promised. "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." "He shall guide you into all the truth." "All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you." This is certainly distinct, and the time when these words were spoken gives intensity to the truth which they set forth. The mission of the Holy Spirit is to give Christ to the world. He was not to succeed Christ, as Joshua followed Moses, and Elisha Elijah; but He was to bring the unchanging Christ into the life of the world, to extend his teaching, and his work. He was so to glorify, to illumine Christ that men might see Him. He would have said, as under his teaching St. Paul wrote, that in his ministry He was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. As the apostle's ministry was wide, so is that of the Holy Spirit. The circle is very large through which He moves, but its centre is forever fixed, so that if you should take Christ from the thought of the Holy Spirit you would take away his gift and grace.

The order of grace, as of nature, is not succession, but progression. We keep and we add. All that the Father was, and all that He has done will remain, as when the coming of Christ was added ; and so completely was Christ in the life and thought of God, and so entirely was He devoted to the doing of the will of the Father, that He said, in words whose deep simplicity we ought not to misconceive, "I do nothing of myself : but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And He that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone : for I do always those things that please Him." With similar words the Holy Spirit comes to us, and it is not presumption when we think of Him as taking to himself that which Christ had said, "I do nothing of myself. He that sent me is with me. I do always those things that please Christ." What is this but the sublime truth that God is spirit, and that as the Holy Spirit He is presenting to the world Christ and the Cross on which the love of God has redeemed the world. As the Father speaks out of the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him," so the Son of God is saying, as we look upon Him, "He that hath heard me hath heard the Father, and he that shall hear the Holy Spirit he shall hear me, and know the Father and me ; this is Eternal Life, and into this knowledge the Spirit of Truth shall

lead the willing spirit of men." It is very simple ; for man, too, is spirit, so that he can hold communion with the spirit which gave him life, and " this is life ;" so that as light blends with light, and air with air, the spirit who is God enters the spirit who is man, and abides there in a union which is perfect and permanent. We are conscious of this spiritual presence and influence. We know our own spiritual life, and the life of our friends ; and we feel sometimes, certainly we feel, that we have the presence of God with us.

The confidence of Christ in the continuance of his life in the world is perfect, and was never stronger than on that night when He was giving to his disciples his last promises, before He went out to Gethsemane and Calvary. That confidence was to remain when He had been lifted to the throne of heaven. He was still to bless the world. He was himself to be in the world. He promised, at an hour when a promise, if possible, was doubly sacred, that He would be with his friends whom He was to leave in the world as his witnesses and ministers. They would not see Him, but they would know that He was with them, and it was to be in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The time when this enlarged work of the Holy Spirit was to begin was therefore fixed by necessity. He had, indeed, always been in the world. He

had taught men, directed them, inspired them in a presence and a power never absent from obedient and waiting hearts. But as it needed the fullness of time for the Son to come into the world, so it needed the fullness of time for the Holy Spirit to come. This is clearly set forth in the Gospel. Jesus stood in the temple on the last day, that great day of the feast, and saw the water poured from the golden pitcher, and the weary, thirsty, unsatisfied hearts of men around him; and speaking in a pity and a power far beyond all that priests and prophets held He declared: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He promised more than that, — that if a man would believe on Him, there should flow from him rivers of living water. The Gospel adds: "But this spake He of the spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." That was the point, then, when the special and enlarged ministry of the Holy Spirit was to begin. It is impressive to mark that there was no need that He should add to what Christ had said and done, but only that He should give these to the world, renew them, carry them into the thoughts of men, make them a part of the life of men. The work for which the Father had given the Son was finished. The world was to learn this and re-

ceive it. He could not announce the Resurrection of Christ till He had risen from the dead. He could not present the death of Christ till He had died. He could not bring to remembrance all the truth which Christ had taught till the teaching was complete ; then, when the Lord had ascended into the heavens, the Holy Spirit was seen and known of men, and the work of Christ gained their hearts and won them to the faith.

This method is not altogether peculiar to the teaching of Christ. It belongs in other domains of knowledge. In these centuries which are not far behind us, continents have not been created but found ; not lifted from the sea, but brought into the sight of men. The planets have not been fashioned, but they have been seen. Their courses have not been determined, but learned. The work of science is not creation, but discovery and employment. It combines, directs, uses what it finds, makes the secrets of Nature the common truth of the world. On that day when the Holy Spirit came in strength, that Pentecost which we single out from all the Pentecosts of history, there was no new truth created, but the former truth was declared with power that never had been known, the power to which men submitted and by which they were changed. The Apostles had nothing to add to the essential truths of religion. They pointed back

with steady hand, and from the past brought out the future. They taught what Christ had taught, unfolded his instruction, repeated his promises, and brought men to life. The grand moral and religious truths which we are living by are Christ's truth. We still say "Our Father," and have nothing to add to it. "My Father's house" remains the best picture of heaven. Love God and love your neighbor are the largest duty. The Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes still content us, and there is no more blessed word for the weary and heavy-laden than that which has been heard through all the burdened years, "Come unto me and rest." St. Paul ascended to the height above which no man has gone and knew that nothing shall separate the loving heart from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. When we would describe the spirit of charity and helpfulness, we find nothing better than his words which make Love the greatest thing in the world; and we have no higher solace in the presence of the death which comes to every man, than his triumphant teaching of the resurrection, which rests all its weight and gains all its inspiration and the entire wealth of its triumphant encouragement from the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Is there any truth which a man needs to-day for guidance and comfort, for faith and life, that is not found in the words of men

who do no more than to find all their knowledge in the truth which Christ has taught, and in the life which Christ has given?

But to know this truth, to be able to speak it, to give to it an entrance into the minds and hearts which needed it, was more than Apostles could accomplish, was indeed the work of the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ, to whom He had committed both his Apostles and his truth, saying, "He shall glorify me : for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." We are well aware how much depends upon the teacher of the truth. Even the voice makes the words plainer, and gives them entrance to the ear and to the soul. It was not the thought of the poet merely, but it was a necessity of the heart when one called for the reading of words which should delight him, and asked for this added grace : "Lend to the rhyme of the poet the beauty of thy voice." I call to mind an instance of this kind where the want is revealed. One of our own clergymen, himself a poet, fond of the poetry of the English Laureate, found himself unable to understand, or appreciate as he felt he ought to do, the poem of "Maud," wherein we have the unfolding of a lonely, morbid soul which feels the influence of a passionate love. But it was granted to this man to sit one evening at twilight in Tennyson's study at Aldworth, and to hear him

read his own words. The voice was deep, strong, musical, and moved in a rhythmic chant, as if the poet were lost to everything about him, and were living only in his own lines, recalling the life which he had described, and which had been very real to him. The reading was full of feeling and reality, and the voice changed with the thought, sometimes moving as the wind among the pine trees, and sometimes falling like the waves which throb upon the beach ; and as the reading moved on, and when it was completed and the voice was still, the man had gained the meaning of the poem, had felt the power of its thought, the influence of its spirit. Somewhat in this way the Holy Spirit takes the words of Christ, takes the words of the Apostles whom He has himself instructed, reads them to our heart, gives his own tone to them, his own accent and emphasis, till we feel them as at no other time, and they gain possession of our mind ; so that it may be said that no one has come to a full understanding of the life and teaching of Christ till he has had the Holy Spirit read to him, adding the charm of his own voice to the words which are thus inspired. For the full understanding of divine truth there seems to be needed, even if in less degree, an inspiration of the hearer to receive it as well as of the teacher to express it.

Take one saying of our Lord's, one of the last

and largest. It was on Tuesday in the week of the Crucifixion. Two disciples came to Him, saying, "There are certain Greeks here who desire to see Jesus." Impressed with their coming, with this entrance which his words had gained into the world which lay beyond his own people, He gave no answer to the request; but pausing for a moment, it would seem, He said: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified," and a little later, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." He would draw men of all nations; the Jew and the Gentile would come, and there were no others. He said this, signifying what death He should die. The suffering at the Cross, the sufferer upon the Cross, the truth that the death was not for himself but for other men, the promise that in this was Eternal Life, would draw men to Him. What He had not accomplished as He walked among men, He would then secure. Men would come to Him, when they saw Him there. The way to God would be open, and they would consent to return to God, by the new and living way of the Cross. He would not compel men, but He would invite them, persuade them, and they would come to Him. It was a sublime assurance for the hour of his agony, and it marks the confidence which belonged to Him and carried Him steadily forward to his death. In this

confidence, He was ready to lay down the life which no man could take from Him. He knew that He should draw men, and He has. In every land of the earth, upon the islands, upon the distant points of coral where a few have made their home, He has drawn men to himself; and that which has drawn them, out of every tribe and kindred and nation and people, has been Christ lifted upon the Cross. This was the word preached by Apostles, witnessed by martyrs, established in the Church and its Sacraments, and carried by the messengers of later days to all the earth. It is this which has drawn men to Him, and which must always draw. I do not believe that a man ever saw Christ upon the Cross, really saw Him, knew Him, knew what the lifting up meant to Him and to those for whom He gave his life, and was not drawn to Him. It was so at the beginning; it has been so ever since. It will be so to the end. But it is necessary that He be lifted up. It is not enough that He died upon the Cross on Calvary. Men must know that He died upon the Cross, and with what intent. They must see Him, and learn from Him, feel his presence and his life. He must be lifted before the hearts of men now, if they are to be drawn to Him. How shall this be accomplished? By repeating the gospel, telling again the story of the Crucifixion. There is but One who can tell it, and make it deeply

felt, but One who can so lift the Cross of Christ that men shall be held by it, drawn to it, made to feel its infinite compassion, and be brought into the fullness of its endless life. Only the Holy Spirit can take of the things of Christ, the Cross of Christ, Christ lifted up, and so present Him that men shall be drawn to Him. When He lifts the Cross before the heart, men are attracted to the Saviour, unless they will that it shall not be so. Men are free even under this gracious influence, and if they will not come they do not come; but if they will, the Cross lifted by the Spirit of God draws them and holds them.

If I may change the imagery a little, the gospel has been compared to a seal. It is not enough that the seal be near the wax, that it touch it, that the wax even be conscious of the presence of the seal. The seal must be pressed into the wax, held there till its impress is made, then it can be removed, and the mark of the seal remains. The truth of Christ may be brought near the heart, may even touch it, and no mark be left. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to press the truth in, to hold it there, till the soul possesses it. Then there is stamped upon the soul the image of Christ lifted upon the Cross.

We have the words of the Redeemer of the world. We know his life, his death, his Resurrection, but we need to feel these, or to feel them

more deeply, and to have them fixed in our life. It is very simple, but it is very beautiful, even divine, that the Spirit of Truth will enter our thought and affection and will and life, and bring in with Him the grace and truth we need, and make them a part of our thought and life, inspiring our spirit with the spirit of love. He will do this, He will leave the mark of Christ upon us, deepening it, enlarging it; He will make it our life, till its joy and strength are ours; till it becomes courage and constancy and devotion; till we ourselves are spiritual and divine, and the life that we live we live in the faith of Him who loved us and gave himself for us. To Him our Lord intrusted the cause for which He gave his life. To Him He commits us, for whom He died and rose again. He is the Shepherd of Christ's sheep, and He makes us the sheep of the Shepherd, and the shepherds of other sheep. In this light and peace we live, forever drawn on by the vision of the resting Christ in his eternal glory; and as we live on toward Him, we hear the voice encouraging and welcoming us, for out from the heavens comes the greeting to our home: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!"

VI

THE GRACE OF THE TOUCH

S. MARK vi. 56

THE GRACE OF THE TOUCH

THERE are many ways of helping our neighbors and blessing the world. Some men take more than one of these, and others only the one to which they seem specially appointed. Our Lord, in the largeness of his life, employed them all. He talked, and they said that never man spake like this man ; and his words were spirit and life, for He was the Truth. He wrought wonderful deeds of mercy, till those who saw them marveled, and from all the land men came to Him, that He might do what no one else in all the world could do for them. But in the record which preserves his words and his works there are few sentences finer than this, " As many as touched Him were made whole." He was not speaking, He was not working, but they came to Him, glad if they might touch but the border of his garment, and receive of his restoring grace. To more than are named to us was this blessing given. He gave it at a cost, for He perceived when virtue went out from Him. It was to those who touched Him, not to those who saw Him, heard

Him, admired Him, but to as many as touched Him, bringing their scant souls into contact with his infinite compassion; so close upon it that nothing separated them from his power and love. To this divine grace which was in Him we pay our homage, but we can do more than that; for while it is quite true that no one can be all that Christ was, or do all that Christ did, still it is to be gratefully recognized that in our degree his grace and truth may become a part of our life so that we too can speak words of truth, and do deeds of mercy, and be so full of virtue that whoever touches us shall be helped. We can never cease to adore the greatness of the nature and the life of Him whom we call Lord and Master, but more and more, as we come to know Him, shall we find that He does not present himself before us merely to be worshiped, but that his life may become our life, and that this world may be blessed in us. The branch is not so great as the vine, but it holds the same life, and it bears the fruit which the vine delights to bestow. He even went so far as to give a promise which always surprises us, that if we live in Him, we shall do the works that He did, and greater works.

We certainly know very many who live in the power of Christ, whose words are spirit, whose works are mercy; and many to whom this grace is given, that as many as touch them share their

virtue. There are many sorts of people in the world, and this division of men is easily perceived. There are some who influence us by their words and works; and there are others whose influence over us is quite as real who do not strive to do special acts of helpfulness, but are content to live and let us feel, if we will, the force of the living. Yet this unsought influence is joined to the power which shows itself also in active ministries. The life which is manifest is the disclosure of the hidden life; and because of what we see we are readily affected by that which is concealed, but of which we are so sure that without effort we yield ourselves to its control. It is not the mere silence, but it is the silence which follows words fitly spoken which impresses us. We read of silence in heaven, but it was only for about the space of half an hour, an island of silence in an ocean of sound. Words and deeds, if they be sincere, are the expression of the life which is behind them. Thus it comes to pass that men whose words we trust and whose kindness we receive are able to help us beyond their particular thought of us and our necessity.

There are many who lack this; whose lives are just, whose words are accurate, whose conduct is honest, but from whom there comes no benefit which they do not plan to give to us. Their cup

is full, but it does not run over. They kindly regard the petition of the Queen of Sheba, but they add no royal bounty. I think we feel that those who give to us out of the exuberance of a rich character, who do not need to seek us out and of set purpose to exert themselves to help us, but who do help us by letting us live near them and touch them with our trusting fingers, are our greatest benefactors. It is not unlikely that those who read these words may be conscious that the greatest help which has come to them from men has come from those who were not trying to control them. It was a strange reply, in the sound of it, made by a noted preacher when one said to him, "But you preach to do good, do you not?" "Heaven forbid!" he answered. His meaning is plain enough, that he sought to speak the truth, and to live it before those who looked to him, and to let it find its own way to each man's life, and let each man take from it what he chose. Men differ very greatly in this power of giving out to the simple touch. For this influence we have no name. We call it magnetism, which means nothing; it certainly is not that. The best word to describe it is vitality, for life holds by the very tenure of its being the power to extend itself and join other life.

The lessons one should draw from these teachings would seem to be obvious. Let us keep within

reach of those who are strong enough to answer to our touch. Let us find little time for those who can only help us when they mean to help us, and avoid those who, whatever they may say, can only weaken us. Shall we have nothing to do with men who are merely righteous, and turn utterly away from those who are weak? We can go to them, and stand near to them, when we are conscious that we know that which it would be well for them to learn, and are strong enough to give virtue to them and thus enlarge our own. But we cannot afford, while life is serious and so great strength is required, to let those influence us who have no vigor which will give itself, whose spirit is dismay, whose biography is defeat, who can only surround us with the malaria of discouragement. No man can afford to consort with disappointment, but men should be strong enough to deliver from defeat those who have too little heart to escape by their own skill.

It may seem that these virtues which have been commended are the virtues of quiet people, lacking force, strangers to the real life of the world. It is very far otherwise. The quiet virtues are the strong virtues. The Beatitudes of our Lord are given to those who are meek, and poor in spirit, and pure in heart, who show mercy, and make peace, and endure persecution for righteousness'

sake. But they are for the vigorous nature. The acts which come for reward in the Day of Judgment are not the acts of men boastful of their strength, whom the crowd admires for their stature, but of men of simple ways, of large heart, whose works of mercy are so within their power that they can be the habit of their life. We hear of active and of passive virtues. There are no passive virtues. Virtue in its very thought is activity. What is its first syllable but man in a robust character? By the active virtues are meant such as these: courage, liberty, generosity. But these make no noise, set up no pretense, and their voice is not heard in the streets. What are termed passive virtues would be these: meekness, humility, patience, purity. But it is clear that these virtues whose name is simple belong only to the strong character. When anything resembling them is found in a weak character, it is itself weakness. Thus meekness in a weak man becomes sycophancy. Humility becomes servility, and probably hypocrisy. Patience is not the tame submission to the inevitable, but it is the brave adjustment of our thought to the conditions of our life. The apostle who was so fortunate in his phrases has spoken of this, combining two words that we do not usually associate, in "the patience of hope;" the patience which with all its submission is strong

in expectation, and the hope which with all its confidence waits quietly for its fulfillment. Purity is more than innocence. It is not the simplicity of a child; it is not the colorless character of one who never has lived out of doors. Purity is the uprightness of a man who under temptation has kept his virtue, who has refused to be bribed, who against all inducements has refused to put out his money to usury, or to take reward against the innocent. It is to purity tried, enlarged, exalted, that the promise comes of the ability and the opportunity to see God, whom only the good can see and know. Virtue must be intelligent, never yielding itself to fear, never refusing duty. The test between weakness and strength was well given by a strong English woman, when at the close of the day she made this inquiry of her thought: "Have I done my duty, or did I sophisticate and flinch?" Virtue belongs with wisdom and daring. A weak general sees the enemy approaching and listens to his fear: "The enemy is strong, I must retreat." The virtuous general sees the enemy approaching and listens to his courage: "The enemy is strong, I must bring up my reserves."

It may impress these helpful truths upon us if we recall some of those who have illustrated them. They come readily to your minds, those whom you have met and who have blessed you by letting you

touch them. English students used to say that they felt better all day if they could meet Maurice in the morning. The sight of President Woolsey, as he crossed the college grounds, was a benediction upon the students who saw his quiet walk, and looked with reverence upon the bending form. The saint of Harvard, who not long ago entered into his rest, was always giving out virtue to those who touched him. A student was asked, "Why is it that you always cheer him more loudly than any one beside?" He hesitated, for he had never thought of any reason; then he gave the best answer that could be given: "I do not know. We like to see him around the yard." A student crossing the college yard, very late at night, afterward bore witness to the influence upon him as he looked up and saw "the old Doctor's light burning." The light was not burning for him, nor had the man behind it kindled it with any thought of reaching a wanderer over the green. It was not because it was a light, or because there was a man behind it, or because the man was a scholar and a preacher, but because the boy knew that the great heart was there busy with the truth, that a great worker was stretching the day into the night, that a good man was doing something, it mattered not what it was, which he meant to be of service to the world, or which would be of

service, even if he was not thinking it. It was fine testimony which a plain man bore to a preacher of whom he knew little, but whose presence was familiar on the streets of the town: "I would rather see him walk than hear anybody else preach." I knew an old minister in Maine who in his advanced years could do little service, but who was gratefully remembered by those whom he had long blessed. "No matter if he cannot work," they said, "it is worth all his salary just to have him live in the town." That is a beautiful tribute to a simple life which is on the stone by the grave of a good woman who rests in Mount Auburn; only these words: "She was so pleasant." But why should I prolong the instances when your own thoughts have already outrun my words?

I am quite sure that you are more than willing to assent to all that has been said. But let us ask, each for himself, a curious question, and take time to frame the answer honestly, faithfully, patiently; let each one of us put this inquiry to his own heart: how does it affect a person to meet me? Not, what things am I saying day by day, or what is the spirit of my words. Not, what am I doing out in the world. Not, what am I giving, how great is the sum of my charity. Not, what have I effected in my efforts to do good. Not, how far have my well-intentioned purposes accom-

plished the design I gave to them. Not any of this, but only a simple question, perhaps harder to answer, but not impossible. When a person meets me day by day, lives in the house with me, is in the same office with me, rides with me to and fro, what effect does it have upon him? Is he braver because he meets me? Does the sun seem to shine more brightly? Does he take up his work more cheerfully, and carry his burden more patiently? Does life seem to him a richer thing, and does he bless God more heartily that he is alive, simply because, day after day, in the associations of life he touches me? We meet often, and when I am going up the stairs and he is coming down what does he rub off from me and carry away with him? What deepening mark is made upon him because, while we are hurrying, each upon his own way, we touch one another? I do not ask the question with any thought of oppressing or burdening you. It is possible that some are not able to persuade themselves that those are blessed who touch them; but I am confident that if we will be honest, as truthful with ourselves as with another, willing to submit our modesty to truth, we shall be obliged to confess to ourselves what we never speak aloud, that we trust, we quietly trust, that those who touch us are healed. It were a pity to have it otherwise when it is not difficult to have it thus.

We agree in this, that a life such as we have been thinking upon is greatly to be desired. We should like to make our influence only for good, and then to deepen it. We wish that we could enlarge life, could make it tell for more, but we think we are not very wise; we know that we are not rich; we dare attempt no lofty enterprise. We cannot be always talking, with so much that we are compelled to do. We cannot be always carrying our neighbors in our mind, and reaching out to help them. The days are short and work is hard. Necessity is exacting in its claims. What, then, can we do? It is possible so to have ourselves that when we are hurrying to our work, when we are most busily committed to it, when there comes to us only the brief leisure of a chance meeting, or the quiet method of common life, we may still be of service, perhaps of greater service than if we were striving to do some good we had resolved upon,—if we can keep ourselves so full of virtue that they who touch us shall be made whole. It is light, not lightning, that serves the purposes of men. It was finely said, that the sun does not lecture the planets upon the duty of shining, but it shines; and if the planets come in its way they have to shine also, for the light falls upon them and flashes away from them.

This is after our desire; happily, as we should

expect, this is God's appointment. In his kindness to the world He has made few great men ; but in his kindness He has ordained that every man may do the deeds which shall help the world, and beyond this may do good to the world simply by living in it. When He would improve the home, his method is to give more virtue to some one within it, who, because they are there together, must touch others every day. When a great good comes to the church, it comes not, commonly, in some flood of blessing, falling at once upon every heart, but it comes to the few, who will to have it so, who are living much in the thought of God, and in communion with his word, and who like their Lord go up into the mountain, and continue all night in prayer. They stand, they live, within the church, and men come and go around them, and whoever touches them is blessed. This is God's appointment. Can we consent to it? Can we fail to consent to it, if we desire to make our life large and true, to be such men that the power of Christ shall be within us, and the grace of the touch shall be the blessing of God to those who know us?

We can have a great enlargement of our influence if we desire it, if we can believe that which we know, the power that comes in quietness from the resources of strength that are beneath it. It

must be an honest influence and constant. We do little good with long intervals. The current of life must not be interrupted, if life is to reach its appointed end. We cannot by anything that we wear make up for the lack of hidden virtue. Pretense is soon discovered, and one who has been found insincere has narrowed his life through his dishonor. Not by saying good words which possibly we do not believe, or performing brave actions simply for effect, can we make our life robust. We hear much of setting an example. I do not know which is the more devoid of interest, setting an example, or following an example. To do what we do not wish to do, in order that somebody else may do what he does not wish to do, can have little pleasure and less value. The trick is soon found out. They make artificial flowers which deceive the eye, but the touch finds out the sham. It is only truth, constantly obeyed and thoroughly believed in, which will give to us the power of responding with the grace of the touch.

We need to caution ourselves here. There is an attraction in unconscious influence which may betray us. If we fancy that it is easier and cheaper to work and give unconsciously than with design, with actual words and with the coin of the realm, we may find that our life is devoid of good, either intentioned or unintentioned. We need always to

be on our guard against the easy way ; the way of influence which is hardest may still be the best. Yet it is not against a useful life that it is agreeable to us and brings the reward which we are not seeking. It is always to be remembered that the life which responds readily to the touch is a life that we have made great in its wisdom and vigorous in its force. A great character is a great achievement, and we shall esteem it the greater when we mark the steadiness of its influence. How shall we get this power to help men who simply touch us ? We shall get it from God, from loving intercourse with Him whose gentleness gives greatness. We shall receive it in the place of prayer. We shall find it in the Bible where the silent words, waiting submissively for our wondering eyes, give out their light to us. The entrance of the word of God gives understanding to the simple and power to those who have no strength. We shall find it in the service of Him who is the Truth and the Life, who gives to us abundantly of that which made Him divine, that bearing his name we may do his work in the world. When, putting away that which imprisons us with ourselves, and leaves us shut out from the day, we come to Him who is "never so far off as even to be near," and permit nothing to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord,

then shall there come to us the light and life and love which are in Him.

We bring from men who have gained this divine life that which will be life to us. We learn of those who have learned of God. We touch those who have touched Him, and the grace of God, not lessened by coming in their lives, is made our own. Strength and comfort are given to us from the hands of men. Let us keep with men in whom we find the grace of the touch, but with them let us reach out our hand to Him who in himself has the life divine, lifting up our nighted eyes till they shall touch his fingers, turning our brow to Him till He shall breathe upon it the Holy Spirit, opening our inmost life till He shall fill it with his glory. Then shall we know, and those who live with us shall know, what that simple word of the gospel means, "As many as touched Him were made whole."

VII

THE WHEELS AND THE SPIRIT

EZEKIEL i. 21

THE WHEELS AND THE SPIRIT

THIS is a mechanical age which we are living in. There is no imagery which presents it better than that which was used by the Hebrew prophet, one of the captives by the river of Chebar, who saw in his vision what he could only describe as wheels, with living creatures among them. The figure is very bold, but somewhat confusing. It is plain that the wheels stand for the forces of the divine rule in the earth, in government, in providence, and in all the control exercised by God. The living creatures are God's messengers and ministers by whose action the course of things is directed in the world. They have various names, cherubim, angels, men. The comparison is not peculiar to the prophet, for St. James speaks, long afterward, of "the wheel of nature;" and in many places Holy Scripture presents to us the spirit which is moving in the affairs of men.

I am not concerned now with the special thought of the Hebrew exile, yet the illustration has its meaning here. I do not know that I can better

describe the work of the world than under this imagery of wheels, mechanism, arrangement, through which the thought of men is moving, and by which the purposes of men accomplish their decrees. One verse written by Ezekiel may bring this more distinctly to our minds: "When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."

We have indeed come upon such a time as that. The days are full of inventions, most of which are to no purpose, but a few of which, the survival of many experiments, become a part of our common life. We talk, write, sing, hear, by machinery. We travel and print by it. We work with it, and play with it. We plant and we reap with it; until almost everything that can be done by mechanism is employing it. One whose time might have been better spent has gone so far as to contrive an appliance by which many cups for the Holy Communion can be filled at one time, thus leaving leisure for something more desirable than this service of the sanctuary. Government itself is largely an affair of mechanism. We have constitutions, laws, offices, officers, almost without limit. In society, we have associations, clubs, leagues, colleges, churches, till it is no small part

of an education to discover these auxiliaries and to know how to use them with economy.

This is considered an advance, and doubtless it is. To utilize the forces of nature is one of the highest achievements of our time. To discover power, to combine forces, to leaguer them with our will, is certainly to enlarge life, and greatly to increase its accomplishment. But it must be confessed that there are some considerations upon the other side. By machinery which works rapidly we may produce more things than are needed, and enterprise may be checked, business hampered, and men deprived of opportunities for work because of the goods which are stored up until the time when they shall be wanted. It is a very serious inquiry, also, whether the time which we gain by the new methods is employed to any better purpose than when it was engaged in the old ways. It is true that we travel much faster than we used to do ; but is this altogether a gain ? Are we not away from home too much, wearying ourselves by rushing from place to place, and lessening our interest in all places by being devoted to none ? The crowds of burdened, anxious people along our streets, thronging our stores, standing in our cars, cannot but suggest the thought that it were much better if it had been more difficult for them to quit their homes. We print much more rapidly and cheaply

than ever before ; the result is that we print many things which should never be published, and flood the world with a great deal of reading of which nothing can be said so good as that it is utterly worthless. If it were more costly to print a book, we should have fewer poor books ; if it were more costly to own a book, we should buy fewer which are not worth the reading. It is confessed by those who know the most about it that it was never so hard to do business as it is now. Our business men were never so hurried ; their hours of work were never so long ; their periods of rest never so anxious as in these days of rapid transit, when one can speak to his neighbor across the continent, and bring every morning to his desk the recent news from the most distant clime. It is very greatly to be doubted whether the machinery which finds its way into our houses and offices and factories has made life any pleasanter or work any more remunerative. The slow methods almost compelled thought. The mind seems to work most steadily when the hands are employed. The very concentration of our force upon some occupation which is so simple as to dispense with constant care favors the employment of our thought and the fixing it in well-ordered channels that it may work out patient results. It was the testimony of one of the men who sought repose and comfort at

Brook Farm, one of the few thoughts which have come from that experiment and are worth preserving, that milking cows is favorable to meditation.

There was certainly something in the old home ways which fostered thrift and thought, made strong characters, trained boys and girls for the work they were to do in the world. Whatever we have gained in these days of contrivances, we have lost some things which we could poorly spare. When the wise woman of the home, as wise as the woman of the Book of Proverbs, sat by her open fire or open window, and worked willingly with her hands, she was doing what no mechanism ever invented could attempt. Into her long seams which kept her cunning fingers busy she sewed long thoughts. She sewed much prayer and purpose into the stitches, which, like the temple of God, were full of strength and beauty. I verily believe that the sturdy character of the New England men and women of past generations was due in no small degree to the sewing of their mothers. I speak with utmost reverence, in memory of a home by the sea, when I remind you of that to which I think you will give assent, — the sacrament of the needle.

But in any case, however fine the machinery may be, the wheels are nothing without the spirit. It is mind, after all, which invents the mechanism

and employs it. Machines do not produce machines, and perpetual motion remains undiscovered. The printing-press cannot think. The writing types are at the mercy of the mind ; they cannot make the thought, nor take the place of the thinker. The mind invents the mechanism. The mind employs it, determines what shall be printed and written. The personality of the writer gives much of its value to the writing. We want to feel the man within the words, and to this end that which his fingers have wrought will be of service to us. A letter written by machinery may be well enough in ordering merchandise ; it is of less use for expressing friendship or emotion. What John Sterling wrote to Carlyle was not overstated : “ Your signature is not at the end of your letters only, but in every word you have written.” In our school-days we repeated, with the admiration that was expected of us, that “ the pen is mightier than the sword.” It is by no means true, save under very limited conditions ; nor is that what Lytton said, but this : —

“ Beneath the rule of men entirely great
The pen is mightier than the sword.”

“ Take away the sword ;
States can be saved without it ; bring the pen ! ”

This is obvious enough, yet it needs to be considered. We have a natural but overweening

confidence in machinery. We carry this so far that in the language of political life we set a machine to run a machine. Yet we know better than this, for we elect officers when we have established offices, well aware that however perfect may be the mechanism, a perfect man is needed for the best use of it. Hence, with all our confidence in it and in those who are using it, we find it necessary to furnish from the life of the people the added thought which is required. Thus we have in our government an Indian Department, administered by many men and at great cost ; but we have also scattered through our towns little associations to make sure that the governmental machinery is doing its work well. We try to incite those who are using it, and to improve the wheels which they are running. We have an elaborate system of civil service intrusted to men who are in honor held to see that it is honestly administered, but at the same time we have our private associations, our papers, and numberless lectures and essays, not only to make the wheels better, but to make sure that there shall be spirit enough in those to whom they are intrusted to see that the best work is done in the best way. One of our wisest manufacturers foresees the time when the wheels which have made much of the industry of New England will stop, because the Merrimac River, losing its

forests, will lose the rains of heaven which it can now gather together and harness to the wheels of our factories. The wheels must have the constant force from above them. The need of maintaining the spirit need not be urged, although we do need to remind ourselves and others regarding it. Even public sentiment, with all the intricacies of its feeling and instincts, cannot be trusted to do what needs to be done for the community and for the nation, but must itself be taught and inspired by single men of lofty spirit, of bravery, of intense feeling, who can breathe into the public heart and public voice the spirit of a wise enterprise and advance.

We recognize this principle of the spirit in the wheels ; we see it in nature. Thus when our Lord called the attention of his disciples to the lily by the roadside, He bade them mark not so much the form and texture of the flower as the spirit within, which gave it being and beauty, and He used it that by means of it God might secure the confidence of men in his continual care. So the stars in the heavens are not merely masses of nebulous dust condensed and made to shine ; they are held in their places by the power which created them, led on their way by the fingers from which light passed into them ; and infinitely the finest thing in all the heavens is, not the stars, but

the spirit which inhabits them ; and nothing so fine has been said about them as that they declare the glory of God ; and no use so fine has been made of them as when the watchful shepherd invoked their spirit for the purifying and the governing of his own word and thought. It was a noble and beautiful thing when our master in science, with his pupils gathered around him at Penikese, before he spoke to them of the rocks, or opened his lips to give them any counsel, bade them lift their hearts to God in prayer, to feel the Spirit which ruled the world whose interpreter he was.

We see the spirit in history, too. History is not the record of events, of the movement of men, the conquest of states ; history is the record of thought, of the spirit within the deeds of men, ruling and overruling for the working out of its own intent. The coming of the Pilgrims to our shores was not the sailing of a hundred men and women in a wretched ship. It was the movement of the divine thought.

“The word of the Lord by night
To the watching Pilgrims came,
As they sat by the seaside,
And filled their hearts with flame.”

The vessel itself was a “poor, common-looking ship, hired by common charter-party for coined

dollars ; calked with mere oakum and tar ; provisioned with vulgarest biscuit and bacon ;" yet, "Thou little Mayflower hadst in thee the life-spark of the largest Nation on our Earth."

It is so in our later history. The War of the Revolution did not accomplish a mere change of rulers and the removal of the seat of government. It was the march of an idea ; of liberty working out its own freedom and gaining its ascendancy through the men and armies which it employed. It was in the spirit, and for the spirit, that Warren cried as he fell : "It is sweet to die for one's country !" Our late war was the movement of the spirit of liberty and unity in the mechanism of armies and of governments, and it was of this that our own laureate cried exultantly : "O, beautiful, my country !" And again : "There is something magnificent in having a country to love !" When Guizot asked Mr. Lowell how long the American Republic will last, he made answer, — not saying as long as its rivers run, and its mines yield gold, — but thus : "As long as the principles of its founders continue to be dominant." He saw, as any prophet must see, that a country can never be made or preserved by wheels, but that its life is in the spirit which employs them, and that so long as the spirit is brave and true, when it moves, the wheels will move ; when it is lifted

up from the earth, the wheels will be lifted up beside it, and that the spirit of the living creature gives to the wheels their strength. It is a good sign that in these times of ours we are rising to this thought. We have immense confidence in mechanism. We are learning to turn to the spirit, and of late we have come often to speak a word which a few years ago was rarely heard, or spoken only by some one out of sympathy with the methods of his age. I mean arbitration, the coming together of men and men, the meeting of nation and nation, not to determine their rights, settle their controversies, define their boundaries by strongly adjusted wheels, by armies and by navies, but by honorable thought, by the honest interchange of opinion, by right reasoning, and upright judgment.

We have seen painfully of late the impotence of wheels in a great necessity, and the need of spirit. Europe has been heavily loaded with mechanism. The English, French, German, Russian, Austrian, Italian armies have tramped across the continent, and navies matching the armies have vexed all the seas. But when a nation, cruel and base, murdered helpless people because of their faith, there was not power enough in all the machinery of Europe to defend a man from his murderer, or to place a shield before a helpless child. The machinery of the Powers, as for some reason they

are termed, is huge and cumbersome, but it could not do its work. It could not maintain the right of good men to live, nor compel respect for common law. The wheels kept up their grinding, but there was no grist. We could hear across the ocean the groaning and creaking of the engines; but above it all were borne upon the air, even to our shores, the shrieks of men and women and the cries of babes. Legislation seemed to have "exhausted its mandate." Perhaps after a time the spirit may enter into the wheels and lift them up: the spirit of humanity and fellowship; the spirit of unselfishness and courage; a spirit human, not national; the spirit of God, the Lord of Sabaoth. Doubtless that spirit is there, and the time will come when it will assert its right to rule. Mechanism has been well said to be like a glass bell through which we look, but under which we faint for lack of air. It is a good comparison. At last we shall shatter the glass with a blow, and the spirit will emerge, and begin its work.

There is much in this hurried life of ours, among our inventions and discoveries, which assures us that we know the spirit, that we prize it, in our best moments depend upon it, and for great good seek its help. We strive to foster this by our schools and our churches. We believe that the increase of virtue and patriotism is the in-

crease of strength. We have more and more to consent to this, and to take it into all our life. Our minds go out beyond our petty interests, and the little domain which lies around our door, and we think, often with pride, sometimes with solicitude, of the work that is before us ; for the spirit which brought the Pilgrims to these shores, and made the colonies into a nation, and made the Republic free, must be invoked and obeyed, if the work is to be completed, and the Republic is to be preserved and perfected. For the first time in the history of the world are men called upon to make a Republic such as this, bringing many nations into one nation, under one government, with one patriotism, and one virtue ; tearing up the separate flags, and weaving the strips into the banner of the Republic. For our work we need our wealth, our mines of silver and of gold, and all the treasures which are upon the earth and within it. We need railroads and factories and shops and banks, at the East and at the West, at the North and at the South. We need government and laws for the strong body, through which the strong spirit that from the beginning has been at work, and has made no serious mistake, may complete its task with vigor and in peace. We must give the national spirit everywhere, the spirit of light, of freedom, of life, the spirit of the Puritan and

the Republic. How shall we do this but by receiving the spirit and obeying it, every man for himself, here, where we live? We shall do this here and over all the land by our schools, which teach history and geography, good manners and high virtue. We must build churches everywhere ; not yet cathedrals, but log meeting-houses, till we can build better ; if not universities, school-houses for all the children of the people. The sources of spiritual strength which our fathers used are open to us : the heart turned toward God ; the spirit of prayer which ascends to heaven and brings the answer of wisdom and of strength ; the open Bible which every man can read for himself, gathering its lessons of courage and patience ; the Day of the Lord, with the mind released from work, that it may worship, and the soul resting content in the thought of the Eternal Love and Life of Him who loves the country as He loves those who made it ; who loves the country as He loves those who will inherit it. Our fathers wrought faithfully, and their work has one virtue which we admire, its stability. The wheels they used were not of modern make, but the spirit which was in them knows nothing of time and change. If we do not like their wheels, and we can readily improve upon them, we admire their spirit, and that which it has accomplished.

Thus do we stand in our place and consider our work and look along the years. By all means let us make our mechanism thorough, but by all means have our spirit divine. In the places of our government let the commandment of God bear sway. Let there be given to Him the obedience which is his due. In the common life that we share as fellow-citizens let us secure and obey the spirit of the eternal strength. In the quiet of the home, with the heart tender and gentle, we may well nurture the sentiment which is our honor, and affection one for another; toward the country, patriotism; toward God, piety. So may we do in our personal life, in the sanctuary of our home, in our villages and cities, in the states which make the nation; living in the power of the spirit which moves among the wheels, and letting it rule the land. In view of this, in our gratitude and our hope, we can raise upon our heights the beacons which shall flash the light from hill to hill across the "kindling continent," while we give praise and confidence and love and hope to our country. Then shall she attain unto her greatness:

"She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
 She of the open soul and open door,
 With room about her hearth for all mankind."

VIII

THE PLACE OF THE BRANCH

S. JOHN xv. 8

THE PLACE OF THE BRANCH

THE manna came directly from the sky ; that manna always does. Our daily bread does not. When our Lord spoke of the branch and the vine, there were three working together for the fruit, — the husbandman, the vine, the branch. Or shall we say four, and name another quite as essential, the man who gathered the fruit? If we transfer this to the spiritual interests which He had in mind, we have the Father, the Son whom He gave to the world, the men whom Christ drew about himself, and to whom He gave his life, and, finally, those who listened to the disciples and took from them the gift of God which it was their calling to bestow. It seems a long way from the Eternal in his heaven to the grapes plucked by a man's hand from the vine, but the way is unbroken. It is like a long river whose head-waters, gathered from the springs among the hills, flow down their course till they reach the sea into which men cast their nets and over which they sail their ships. The River of the Water of Life flows from the throne of God, but

men drink of it in the valleys of this world. Thus the fruit proceeds from the vine; it is its life, changed into that which shall be refreshing to the world.

This is the divine way of blessing the world. Many of the gifts of God are given immediately to men, are bestowed by the spirit of God upon the spirit of men. But in the ordinary gifts of his providence and of his grace, there is, commonly, the intervention of the man who is the branch. This is certainly not our way, for only to a limited extent have we consented to it now that it is appointed for us. It is very difficult for men to feel that by the ordinance of God they are of constant and vital importance in the imparting of his blessings. It pleases God to give his Son. It pleases Christ to give his disciples, whom He has instructed and furnished and inspired for his work in the world. There is but one Incarnation of which it can be said that God is manifest in the flesh, and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But there are many indwellings in which the spirit who is God, abiding in the spirit who is man, speaks through his lips, works by his hands, and thus illustrates and conveys his truth and mercy to the world.

The method of Christ's life as it has been given in the gospel makes this plain. "Ye have not

chosen me," He said, " but I have chosen you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain." He meant that his own life, in order to reach the world, should become the life of men and should be his and theirs, to be received by those to whom men carried it as the life of Christ. In this we are following a method which is entirely simple and reasonable, for man is himself spirit, and has the divine nature; he is furnished with power by his Creator, he is endowed with knowledge and truth and life by Christ, to whom he looks as Master and Lord. He has in his measure the character of Christ, for he is a man forgiven through Him, and renewed by the spirit of truth; he has dwelling in him the same Holy Spirit who descended upon his Lord as He stood in the waters of the Jordan; and so far as it can be done he repeats in the world the life which his Master lived when He was seen of men, and has the same intent and passion to glorify God upon the earth and to accomplish the work which He has given him to do. Very real is the trust which is reposed in him, when He who is the Good Shepherd, and who has given his life for the sheep, intrusts his sheep and his lambs to the care of the man. But much more close is the relation in this similitude of the vine, wherein the vine ordains that the life which He is

giving to the world shall pass through the branch, shall be seen in its beauty wherever the branch reaches out, and shall be gathered by the hands of those who shall give thanks, not to the branch, but to the vine and the husbandman. Thus it is that God, who is the source of all life, gives the blessings of life to the world of men whom He has made, and whom He calls his children. It is not difficult, then, to see why our Lord, in his solemn account of the great day which is to come, elevates into a sacrament the giving of a cup of water or a piece of bread, the visit to a prison, the solace of a stranger ; for it would seem to be one man who does all the things which are there commended. The glory of the acts is this, that they are God's acts ; that these are his gifts, given in his spirit ; that they are Christ's blessings, bestowed upon those whom Christ came to save ; that they are therefore divine, and are therefore the witness to the divine life in men. Such deeds, given in the spirit of God to those who are the friends of Christ, — how can they be less than divine, or be unworthy of recognition when the summing-up of life has come ?

It is very evident that God must in a way like this give his blessing to men ; or, at least, that this is the simplest and kindest way. We could not bear the sight of Jehovah upon our streets. Our

eyes would be blinded with excess of light, nor should we be able to do our daily work, and live in calmness, if our homes were flooded with the radiance of Him whom no man hath seen at any time, nor can see; of whom it was written in words which we readily believe: "There shall no man see me and live." Nor could we bear the presence of Christ himself, if He were here in the fullness of his light, for He was the effulgence of his Father's glory. When three men saw the brightness of his face, and the gleaming of his garments upon the mount, they were unwilling to go down again into the world that needed them; they would fain set up tents and leave the world without themselves, and without Him. Then, if He were here, still blessing men as of old, and in the old way, how could we be quiet? He might be at Washington, or at Jerusalem, and how could we rest, how could we work, if He were so near, and yet so remote; and how desolate would seem all the places where He was not! He said truly, and we can see that it was truly, "It is expedient that I should go away," for thus would He give to the world his presence in all places, and on every day; as even now, wherever there is the man in whom He lives, through whom He speaks, in whom He suffers, there He may be found. Wherever He gives others his own grace, as many as touch them are

made whole, because they touch Him. We do not need to go afar to seek Him, to come into intercourse with his life, to feel his spirit. It is not because men become like Him, and we see the likeness, and men are like pictures in a book, representations of that which is far away; but because He is himself in the men, and his life has become their life, and his spirit rules their spirit. We shrink back from this. We are not worthy of such honor. We cannot bear so great a trust. We are unwilling that men who are hungry and thirsty should look to us for the gift of God. But I said that we never thought to have it so. He told us, in many ways, that this was his choice, not ours; and if He has chosen thus to make use of us, who are we that we should refuse, or plead our unworthiness, or consent to our timidity, or fail to listen to the divine calling given to those who even now in the low places of the world lift up their eyes to heaven and say "Our Father"? I am sure that we can see how very much pleasanter it is, how much more generous, how much more like the kindness of Him who loves all his children, and delights, not merely to give to men what they are able to receive, but to give to men what they are able to bestow, that He advances us, because He loves us, beyond the glory of taking, even from the pierced hands, the unsearchable riches of Christ,

to that glory of which Christ himself bore witness in the words which we hear long after the gospel has been spoken, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The place of the branch is indeed the place of receiving, for the life of the vine flows into it; but the place of the branch is the place of giving, for the divine life flows from it into fruit which makes glad the heart of man. It is not that we are simply used, that we are like the channel through which the river flows, never consenting to give it a path to the sea, or are merely consenting to the honor of such service; but that all our power, in all its liberty, our highest faculties in their noblest employ, are engaged in this transmitting of the blessing of God. The will of God enters into our will, which welcomes it, and gives to it a freeman's liberty, and wills to do the will of God. It flows into our affections, which rejoice to be quickened and purified by its presence, and which give themselves and the love of God into ministries for beautifying the earth. It flows into all our heart, into all our life, informing, ennobling, enabling, making our liberty real in the added strength it gives to it, making it blessed in the divine grace with which it inspires it for the fulfillment of its highest aspirations, for the glorifying of its noblest thought.

I wish that we might come to see this. I wish

very much that we all might come to know and confess how magnificent a thing it is to live, to bear the image and likeness of God, to have his life our life, his thought our thought, to be in his wisdom and by his decree indispensable to his intent of love, to his eternal desire to bless the world. I know how hard it is to feel it; even while I speak the words to you my own heart comes far, very far, from knowing how true they are, how true they must be, how sincere is their disclosure of the Eternal Love; how divine, immortal, is the life to which they lead us. But let us not in all our distrust and with all our humility oppose ourselves to the heart of the Eternal which is "most wonderfully kind," or fail to accept the appointment of his compassion and his love who gave his Son from heaven, and who gives his heavenly Son to the world through our lives. Oh, that we had faith enough, humility enough, aspiration enough, to read into our thoughts and to write over our hearts and upon our lips the words of infinite assurance, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples!"

I think we can all feel the delight, the inexpressible advantage, of thus finding the goodness of God diffused among men who enjoy it themselves, and are able to scatter it upon the air, and

to make it everywhere the blessing of men. Suppose there were far away some immense tree, only one in all the world and that remote from men, bearing roses of marvelous beauty and of surpassing fragrance, and that every year some ship coming from the distant shore should bring to us the flowers. How we should hasten to the pier, watch for the coming vessel, take the things of beauty, examine them, enjoy them, treasure them! What a delight it would be, and what a privilege, to live where they might come to us! But think how much better is that common blessing so familiar to us, coming now to be received again, as "the miracle of spring" becomes the daily beauty of the summer, when every one, the poor man and the child, can have the roses growing under his own window, can watch the first appearing of the leaves, can see the buds form themselves, and expand and open, and put forth the heralds of their beauty, and slowly burst into the roses which we may look upon as they grow, which we may take into our hands, which we may carry to the sick, which we can place in the guest-chamber to give the welcome of beauty to a coming friend. Splendid it might be and glorious, the one rose-tree in the heart of India; but more glorious still, and abounding in all which makes us happier, more full of joy in the good gift, are the countless roses which keep their sweetness beside our door.

But there are other advantages that might be mentioned here. By this method of giving the blessing through the vine, and the blessing of the vine through many branches, the fruit is found in many places and at all times, and where the blessings of God come to men through men, it makes them more real to us, perhaps easier to take them because the hand of a neighbor is reached out to us. Then those who bring the blessings to us are those who have made proof of them. They bring to us comfort which they have themselves felt. They stand as witnesses to the transforming and sustaining power of the truth they preach to us. They illustrate in their own lives and out of their own experience that which evidently our like necessity requires and can enjoy. They teach us the grace of prayer by praying themselves. They show us faith by being faithful. They make us know the power of the spirit of God by living in the power of the spirit. They are living witnesses, wearing worthily the name which the ascending Lord gave to men that day when He was to ascend from Olivet, saying, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me."

There is another advantage to be noticed of which we are inclined to make less account, but which we do not quite forget, and which it is surely like the good Lord who loves us all constantly to remember, and that is the great advantage it is to

us to carry to the world the gift of God. What can be purer delight than to stand between his infinite compassion and the world toward which He is compassionate, and to take from his hands, which overflow with goodness, the goodness He would give to those He loves? It is not merely comfort or sympathy. The world is not a hospital, and life is not a walk through its wards with medicine in our hands. It is a place where the sick are, and the poor, and the sad, and it is our privilege to carry to them the solace of God; but the world is quite as really and more largely a gymnasium where we can set all our powers in exercise, and train ourselves until we become athletes, with a vigorous faith, an exultant hope, and a charity that never can be tired. For our own growth in all that is worthy of us, for the enlargement of our manhood, for the expansion of our own hearts, do we need what is so generously granted us, the opportunity in God's name to be God's ministers of his mercy to the world. The fruitful branch has not merely the joy of fruitage as a memory or a present consciousness, but the confidence that bearing fruit is but the prelude to bearing more fruit, and that the delight of the life which is appointed us is the certain anticipation of more life and more delight which are close at hand.

We ought to notice that it is a very great honor

that God gives when He brings to us his strong commandments which are not trivial wishes for feeble men, an easy path for timid feet, a small task for small minds, but are great commandments, sublime, calling for highest virtue, yet bidding us do nothing which is not possible, and to do those things which shall make us most like Himself. In these opportunities for service a like honor comes to us. We are not called to little things, chance gifts, the teaching of things that we have studied out, to the giving of that which our unskilled fingers have made. We are first empowered with divine life, truth, energy, and then permitted to give to men great gifts which shall make them think of the great Giver. The form of the gift may be small, the deed of helpfulness may be in some common way, but nothing is small or common which helps men to live a truer life in a finer spirit. Graciously sublime is that teaching of our Lord which sounds to us like duty, but to the open eye looks like glory: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." But why should we give the glory to Him? Because the good works are his; it is the life of the vine which by the branch becomes the grape.

It is noticed that in all this there is no description of the fruit. No description is needed. God

knows well what He will do. He comes with his own purpose to us. We learn it from Him. We fulfill it. The vine knows how to bear grapes, and it is the knowledge of the vine that the branch uses. Yet we are well able to see as we look at the fruitful life of Christ in the world, what the fruit is. We see it at Nazareth, when He tells what He will do. We hear it when He sends the word of confidence to his forerunner who is in prison. We find it in that life so full of beneficence when words of blessing fell from his lips, and strength from his hands, when light flashed from the ends of his fingers, and healing was plucked from the border of his robe; and in the redeeming purpose which He steadily declared, which led him to Jerusalem and Gethsemane and Calvary. That which He did, being here, He would still be doing and completing; only now He has ascended, and will stand in those He has appointed in his place. "I am the vine, ye are the branches," He said.

Have we learned this? Not all of us. Few of us perfectly. Hence it is that the world is still so poor, so blind and sorrowful. We believe in Him and would serve Him. We look upon the world and pity it, but we do not readily keep our faith and love together. One of the wisest of our Harvard professors said to me, "There are plenty of

students who know two and two, but there are few students who know that two and two make four ; ” that is, who are able to combine the different parts of their knowledge, to see the principles of life in history, and the meaning of history in the principles which it embodies. With all good intentions we may fail in that way, praying to God and worshipping Him as if the world were not given into our keeping, or trying to keep the world as if it were not God who had intrusted it to us. If now we can see that as branches the vine depends upon us, and if we can see that men are looking to us, we shall be incited to turn the life of God into fruit, that He may be served, and to give the fruit to men that their wants may be regarded. We have no call to be anxious for the world, but to be diligent in our care for it. God has never forsaken the world. Why should He not care for it? Shall we stand at one side, then, and let Him do his work? Nay, stand at two sides, and let Him do his work. The branch has two extremities. Let us cling on the one side to the Lord whom we trust and serve, and take abundant life from Him, and then bear it on to those whom we can reach, uniting thus our fidelity to Him who has appointed us with our charity for those who are given to our care. The disciples followed Christ, and believed in Him. They pitied the

hungry multitude, and would have had them sent to the villages to buy bread. Christ called upon them not to separate what He had joined together ; to hold fast their faith in Him and their pity for the people ; and while like branches they reached out to the multitude seated upon the grass, He walked with them, and by their hands made the scanty loaves feed the waiting thousands.

Oh, friends, let us know our calling and accept it ! Pray and work, pray for the poor as we do, but never forget to pray for ourselves. Pray for those who need our help, to Him whose help we need. We pray much for others. It is well. Suppose for a day or two we give the burden of our prayers to petitions for ourselves ; not praying immediately that the people may pluck grapes, but praying immediately that we may give the people grapes which they can pluck. Pray that there may be no hungry children in the world, but pause long enough to carry out the bread we have, or to get more bread that we may carry out. Pray that the kingdom of God may come, but meanwhile see that no missionary is recalled and no missionary school is closed. The world will want but little so soon as we have taken much, and if we are faithful in receiving, the world will be blessed in receiving also. Give what you have is a prudent rule ; but have what you can give is a true law for ourselves and for the world.

May I tell you now a little thing that came to me last night? I had been thinking all the week upon this which I have said, and it seemed to need clearness in my thought; and so, when Saturday was over, a long and weary day, I sat before a blackened hearth. Then a boy, standing for one who brings a divine life, laid logs of wood one upon another, and in some mysterious way a fire sprang up among them. It flowed over them, and made them glow in splendor, and they entered into it all, and crackled, and snapped their fingers in delight; and the fire warmed them to the heart, and then they gave out the warmth, and I felt it who sat before them, and the whole room felt it. The fire rose up between the logs leaping and dancing, and sending out its light to illumine the room, and making the evening air within bright and warm. I wondered whether it was the fire that made the wood burn, or the wood that made the fire burn, and I could not wait to find out. But that which I had been thinking about, and waiting for, came to me in the simple parable of fire and wood. For thus it is the life of God comes to us, brightening our life, warming our heart, sending forth its own brightness in ours, and taking us up into its own thought and intent; living in us, letting us live in it, till the world is helped to God's life and ours, our life and God's,

and no one thinks to part the two. Do not lay a heavy hand on my frail analogy. I know how fragile it is. It came to me when I needed it, therefore I tell it here. Can we let the divine life come to us, set us on fire, enshroud us with its glory? Can we consent that it shall seem to consume us, while it takes our life into itself, and ascending bears it into the Eternal Life and Light?

IX

THE STORY OF A NEW ENGLAND CHURCH

PSALM cxxii.

THE STORY OF A NEW ENGLAND CHURCH

ON the third day of October, 1635, the ship Defence, of London, arrived at Boston. It had been a "longsome voyage" of nearly two months, for the ship was "very rotten and unfit for such a voyage," and at the first storm began to leak badly, so that the passengers thought they might have to turn back. Among her passengers was a young Puritan minister who had been driven out of England, with his wife and young child. They were welcomed by many friends, and entertained for a day or two, and then they crossed the river to Newtown. It happened just at that time that many of the settlers of this village were preparing to remove to Connecticut. This young minister, Thomas Shepard, and his friends, numbering about sixty persons, decided to remain until they could find a better place, and a few of the former settlers, reluctant to remove, remained with them. Among these was John Bridge, a man prominent in the affairs of the town, whose services have recently

been recognized in a statue of bronze. He was among those who had invited Shepard to come to the New World, and had provided a place for him. In the following February these new comers desired to be properly organized as a church. They gained the approbation of the magistrates, and invited the neighboring churches to be present and to assist "in constituting their body." With carefulness and dignity, with regard for order, and an ample sense of the fitness of things, they formed the new church, following in their thought the simple methods of the New Testament. The leading members were men of learning, high character, and exalted purpose, who had consented to become exiles that they might enjoy the religious liberty which was to them more than comfort and life. They entered into a solemn covenant whereby they promised to walk in all their ways according to the rules of the gospel, "and in mutual love and respect each to other, so near as God shall give us grace." They were few in number, perhaps only seven, for it was considered that seven was a convenient number for a church. Thus the beginning was made. It was great in its intent and in its results. It was an entire church : independent, in that there was no human authority over it ; Congregational, in that it was in fellowship with all the churches along the New England coast. Clearly, the church was

not the house in which it worshiped. It did not include those of the company who had not entered into covenant. It did not include any of the other villagers, though they might be connected with it in its services, and aid in meeting its expenses. The church was those men and women, and only those, who had made covenant one with another in the sight of God. In this integrity it was to remain.

The wife of the young minister had encouraged him to leave his own country and seek another beyond the sea. His own account of her influence is full of meaning: "My dear wife did much long to see me settled there in peace, and so put me on to it." The name of Margaret Shepard deserves the honor with which it is regarded. Her husband's testimony is all that she could desire: "When the Lord had fitted a wife for me he then gave me her, who was a most sweet, humble woman, full of Christ, and a very discerning Christian; a wife who was most incomparably loving to me and every way amiable and holy, and endued with a very sweet spirit of prayer." . . . "Thus did I marry the best and fittest woman in the world unto me." The voyage had been a very hard one for the young Yorkshire mother. In one of the many storms, the husband writes, "my dear wife took such a cold and got such weakness as that she fell into a con-

sumption, of which she afterward died; and also the Lord preserved her with the child in her arms from imminent and apparent death, for by the shaking of the ship in a violent storm her head was pitched against an iron bolt and the Lord miraculously preserved the child and recovered my wife. This was a great affliction to me, and was a cause of many sad thoughts in the ship how to behave myself when I came to New England." We must allow the sorrowing minister to continue the story of his wife. A fortnight after the formation of the church, "my dear wife Margaret died, being first received into church fellowship, which as she much longed for so the Lord did so sweeten it unto her, that she was hereby exceedingly cheered and comforted with the sense of God's love, which continued until her last gasp."

We can have no better waymarks for the story we are relating than the series of meeting-houses in which the church had its home. The first was one which it had taken from the earlier settlers. It stood by the side of the river, and it was a small house, probably of logs, but was dignified with a bell. It could not have been humbler than the first meeting-house in Boston, which had mud walls and a thatched roof. It was a small house, but it was the home of great men and great deeds. At the organization of the church we must imagine the

presence of the two Winthrops, and Harry Vane, Dudley and Haynes, Cotton and Wilson, Hooker and Mather ; and among the members of the church were men of prominence in the colony. The humble structure contented men who had left the stately churches of England that they might enjoy freedom of thought and speech. "A wilderness is sweet with liberty." The house was the scene of large events. Dates are of importance here. It was in February that the church was formed. In October of the same year the General Court passed an order, "To give Four Hundred Pounds towards a School or College." In 1637, the Court appointed twelve eminent men "to take order for a College at Newtown." Thomas Shepard was one of the twelve, and it is given as a reason for erecting the college in Newtown that this was "place very pleasant and accommodate," and then "under the orthodox and soul-flourishing ministry of Mr. Thomas Shepard."

In 1638, the place was called Cambridge, because the college was here, and nearly all the men who were interested in it had been trained on the banks of the Cam. In that year, 1638, John Harvard died, bequeathing his library and one half of his property to the young college. The amount was nearly double the appropriation made by the General Court. That Massachusetts Assembly, presided over by Harry Vane, has been said to be

“the first body in which the people, by their representatives, ever gave their own money to found a place of education.” It was fitting that it should bear the name of Harvard and that his statue, the gift of John Bridge, a deacon of the church, should stand among the University buildings. The tribute of Shepard to Harvard is a biography: “This man was a scholar and pious in his life and enlarged toward the country and the good of it in life and death.” Both men were of Emmanuel College, where the Puritan influence was strong and bold; both felt the spirit of their time and their place, which they bore with them over the sea and embodied in the new church and the new college. No one knows the exact burial-place of either of the men, but each has a nobler monument. In 1642 the first college Commencement was held in the log meeting-house. The class was small. In 1646 but nine men were graduated, and in 1686 but seven. A church of seven members was not small by comparison, and the numbers were speedily and steadily enlarged. In 1648 the Cambridge platform of church discipline was framed by a synod assembled in the same meeting-house, and this became the basis for the churches of the colony. The small church, in the small house, preserved with dignity the ordinances of religion. The members of the church bore their part in all the

affairs of the town and made with those who did not enter into their covenant the community of common interests and a common life. It was a wonderful advantage to church and town that the first citizen was this young minister. His life had been a troubled one, but its troubles enhanced its power. His biographers well-nigh exhaust the language in their attempts to describe him. They present him as "a poor, weak, pale-complexioned man," but again as "the holy, heavenly, sweet, affecting and soul-ravishing minister;" "this soul-melting preacher." He was "that gracious, sweet, heavenly-minded and soul-ravishing minister, in whose soul the Lord shed abroad his love so abundantly that thousands of souls have cause to bless God for him." One of the college students has recorded the impression made upon him by the godly minister to whom he listened: "Unless it had been four years living in heaven, I know not how I could have more cause to bless God with wonder, than for those four years." He was a scholar who carried his entire learning and ability into his work. We have his sermons still, and they are good reading, even now. With his opinions few would now entirely agree, but to the principles upon which they were based, and the spirit with which they were inspired, thoughtful men will pay reverence. Some one has made the computation

that in the treatise upon the Religious Affections, by Jonathan Edwards, more than half the quotations are from Shepard. His writings are rich in pithy sentences. I wish that I could repeat many of them. Thus he illustrates the wealth of the poor man who is united to Christ: "A woman that is matched to a prince may have never a penny in her purse, and yet she rejoiceth that her husband hath it." I must add this. "Mariners long to be on shore; but before they come there they would not venture in a mist, but see land first; so should we desire the Lord in the land of the living. It is the honor of a Christian to be ripe for death betimes, yet still before he is ripe he is not to desire it. Children that will be up before it is day must be whipped; a rod is most fit for them; stay till it is day." His preparation for preaching furnishes a good example for the preachers of later times. It is said that he always finished his preparation for the pulpit by two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, accounting "that God would curse that man's labors who goes lumbering up and down the world all the week, and then upon Saturday afternoon goes into his study, when, as God knows, that time were little enough to pray in and weep in and get his heart into a frame fit for the approaching Sabbath." We cannot overestimate the value of such a man to the new community, nor can we trace what we

cannot fail to acknowledge, the benefit which for many generations the town held as an inheritance from him.

In 1637, he married Joanna, the eldest daughter of his friend, Thomas Hooker. The husband's record is artless and affectionate: "She lived almost nine years with me, and was the comfort of my life to me." Afterward he married Margaret Boradel, who would doubtless have gained from him a similar affectionate testimony had he lived to make a record of her excellence; but in 1649, on the 25th of August, he made his will and committed his soul to God. He had prepared himself for the hour of his departure. "As to myself," he said, "I can say three things: that the study of every sermon cost me tears; that before I preached a sermon I got good by it myself; and that I always went up into the pulpit as if I were to give up my account to my Master." He was naturally solicitous for the church in which he had invested his life. When he heard that Jonathan Mitchel, a graduate of the college, had gained the favor of the people, he was content. To the younger minister, he said that "this was the place where he should, by right, be all the rest of his days." He asked some of the people "how Mr. Mitchel's first sermon was approved among them. They told him very well. Then, said he, my work is done." In a few days he was at rest.

“His name and office sweetly did agree ;
Shepard, by name, and in his ministry.”

Then the church called the man who had been approved to be its minister. He came to be known as the “matchless Mitchel.” He was an over-hard student, it is said. These words are preserved, given to one who sought his counsel: “My serious advice to you is, that you keep out of company, as far as Christianity and civility will give you leave; take it from me! the time spent in your study you will generally find spent the most profitably, comfortably, and accountably.” “The College was nearer unto his heart than it was to his house, though next adjoining to it.” So great was the esteem in which he was held that President Mather thus advised the students: “Say each of you, Mitchel shall be the example whom I will imitate.” Richard Baxter said of him “that if there could be convened an Œcumenical council of the whole Christian world, that man would be worthy to be the Moderator of it.”

He was a thorough successor. Not only did he become the minister of the church and the tenant of the parsonage, but he became also the husband of the widow. He had intended to marry Sarah Cotton, a daughter of the great divine, who readily gave his consent. “But the immature death of that hopeful young gentlewoman” prevented “so

desirable a match." Then he turned to the young gentlewoman who had been so lately bereaved. The students celebrated the marriage with epithalamiums; and upon the ancient steward's book is an entry in Mitchel's account whereby he is debtor "by commones and sisinges and a super on his weedinge night."

The little meeting-house had become endeared to the church as its home for fourteen years, and it was pleasant, as they thought of it, to recall the words of the New Testament, which truly described it as "a place by the river-side where prayer was wont to be made." But the time had come when the church must move. It had been an enterprising church. Not content with the sound of its bell, it sent out a man with a drum to call the people. Edward Johnson's story has come down to us, of his wandering out from Charlestown till he came to a large plain where he heard the sound of a drum. He asked a man whom he met what the drum meant, and was told that it was to call the people to Mr. Shepard's meeting-house. From curiosity, or perhaps from the fame of the preacher, he found his way to the house, where he stayed until the pulpit-glass was turned up twice, and he was "metamorphosed, and was fain to hang down his head lest his watery eyes should blab abroad the secret conjunction of his affections." The

result was that he resolved to live and die with the ministers of New England.

A church with so much enterprise must advance with the town in which it lived. So it moved up to the college, and there, within what is now the college yard, on Watch-house Hill, the second meeting-house was erected. There Mitchel's ministry was passed and the ministry of Urian Oakes, at once the minister of the church and the president of the college. He was a faithful man, learned and unwearied in the abundant services to which he was called. But at length it became necessary that he should be assisted, and Mr. Nathaniel Gookin, of a family famous in the early annals of the town, received a call "to be helpful in the ministry in order to be called to office in time convenient." There began the long ministry of William Brattle, of another prominent family.

It may be well, perhaps, to look for a moment into one of those early meeting-houses. We should find a plain room, divided by a central passage, the men upon one side, and the women upon the other. If it were in the very early days, not unlikely some of the men would have carnal weapons. A little later, as the church became able, the house was improved according to the custom of the times. The pulpit was an elaborate structure, with a sounding-board, and the elders and the

deacons sat under it, facing the congregation. The boys had a place by themselves, with a tithing-man to assist them to good behavior. In 1666, Thomas Fox "is ordered to look to the youth in time of public worship." At first the house had benches; afterward a space upon the floor was allotted to one who wished it, and there he erected a pit or pew, which he was to keep in repair, and he was to "maintain all the glass against it." When there was no such private arrangement seats were assigned to the people according to their rank, or property, or age. The proper length for a sermon was an hour, although upon occasions the preacher might "take another glass," as it was facetiously described, and for his convenience, a well-regulated hour-glass was provided. Every Sabbath afternoon, there was a contribution, when the people passed up to the deacons' seats with their offerings. They went with suitable decorum. The magistrates and chief gentlemen went first, then the elders, then all the congregation of men, and most of them that were not of the church, all single persons, widows and women in absence of their husbands. Money and papers were dropped into a box; any other chattel was set down before the deacons. The stranger's money was often regarded by the clergyman as his perquisite. His salary was paid from the voluntary contribution, at first, but afterwards

by taxation. Mr. Shepard's salary is given as seventy pounds, which was among the largest of the times. Marriage was performed before a magistrate. Winthrop mentions a great marriage in Boston, when the bridegroom invited his minister to preach, but the magistrate sent word to him to forbear. The ministers were usually present at a burial, but nothing was read and no sermon was made. Funerals were somewhat expensive, especially when a person of note was buried. This became more exacting as life became more luxurious. In 1768, there is a record of a burial in Ipswich, when the bearers were furnished with gold rings, and the attending ministers received eighteen pairs of white leather gloves. At length an act was passed to retrench these extraordinary expenses.

Fifty years passed on, and the church in Cambridge erected its third house of worship on the same place in the college yard; and the college, that year, 1706, graduated seven men. Fifty years later the church erected its fourth meeting-house, and in the same place; and that year there were twenty-five graduates. All things were increasing. This house was more stately than the others. The college gave one seventh part of the cost of erecting it and keeping it in repair, and thus secured privileges for its officers and students.

The connection of the church and the college, under a different arrangement, has continued until this time. That was a distinguished house. President Quincy said of it after it was removed, "In this edifice all the public Commencements and solemn inaugurations, during more than seventy years, were celebrated ; and no building in Massachusetts can compare with it in the number of distinguished men who at different times have been assembled within its walls." Washington and his companions in arms worshiped there, and there Lafayette was welcomed "on his triumphal visit to the United States." There was the latter half of the long pastorate of Nathaniel Appleton which has been the despair of his successors ; for who can hope to be the minister of one people for sixty-six years ? It seems almost unkind that he should have held so long the monopoly of the position. But the people were content. He was well esteemed, and many traces of his vigilance remain. The written record of his labors comprises little more than lists of persons baptized, married, and received into the church. But he was studious in his care for the lands belonging to the church and congregation, and devised a plan for enlarging, by means of them, the revenues of the parish. He received a goodly portion of his salary in the gifts of the people. We have the record of loads of

wood that were brought to him, after what he terms "a good and laudable custom," that had been dead before Mr. Brattle's death, but had afterward been revived. The list in Mr. Brattle's time shows the simplicity of the life of the town and church. Goody Gove brought a pound of butter, Dr. Oliver, "a line Pork," but Sarah Ferguson presented a pig, which, however, was valued at threepence less than Dr. Oliver's section, which gives some hint of the dimensions of the pig. Then there are "2 powthering Tubs," a tub of salt beef, and wine, and what is written as "Bear," but was in all probability another commodity. Mr. Appleton's salary had been a hundred pounds, yet in 1778 it was six hundred pounds. In '83, it had risen to two thousand and twenty-five pounds. There is history between these payments. Great things had been done between '77 and '83. The large salary was nearly all in paper currency, with only a pittance of silver. The good man was constrained to take what the people were obliged to give. But there is a touching pathos in the simple statement which remains upon the church books, in his own handwriting, as he took his paper bills and consented to call them money, "although they are greatly depreciated." The Revolution had come; the colonies had become a republic, and we know what must have been prominent in the minds

of minister and people, the theme of many a sermon, the burden of many a prayer, the material for many anxious conversations along the streets and in the homes, and at last the spirit of the rejoicing which burst into song and rose into doxology.

But while this meeting-house was the home of the people, there befell the church a greater event than had entered into its history during the two centuries which were gone. In that house was the ministry of a man who deserved the reverence with which he was regarded. As a scholar he held to the principles which had ruled the church life from the beginning, and he preached the truth as it had been proclaimed in four meeting-houses, and illustrated and adorned it in his own walk and conversation. The early part of the century was a period of division in many New England churches by reason of new opinions which had come in, and later than in most places the separation came to this church, and to those who were in alliance with it, who shared in the cost of its services, and were as the shell to the kernel, or the body to the spirit. They were the town, or that portion of the town, whose religious home was in this sanctuary. A majority of the parish, as it was termed, were in favor of the new opinions, and from his office the minister of the parish was dismissed. About two

thirds of the church and one half of the congregation adhered to him. It was very hard for this saintly man who had been the minister of church and of parish for thirty-seven years. He was sixty-six years old, and his long life had been marked with fidelity and devotion which no one questioned. A Sabbath day came when the minister and the deacons and the church went their accustomed way to the meeting-house, to find it closed against them. It was hard for the sixty persons who were in sympathy with the minister to leave for this cause the house which had been the home of their fathers. For the church to stand with the minister was by the decree of the Court the relinquishment of the civil rights which belonged to it in its connection with the parish, and of the precious Communion service, and the money which it had gathered and kept for charity. The ecclesiastical rights of the church were of course retained. With heavy hearts the church and the minister with his deacons turned away from their home. It was like them to turn away, for they inherited the spirit and the act. The founders of the church had turned away from their homes and had crossed the sea. These new exiles only crossed the street, but the street was wider than the ocean had been, and there was no return. Looking down upon the public square which is now the scene of hopeless

confusion, but then was resting in the quiet of the Sabbath, a quietness deepened by the sadness of their spirit and the solemnity of their act, stood the plain village court-house. Up the steps of this house of the law went these pilgrims, great in their confidence and cherishing their alliance with the devoted men of the earliest day. It was a meeting of profound and sacred interest which was held in this strange place on that strange morning. There, for two years, the church had its home. For their meetings for prayer and conference they resorted to a room in their "own hired house," and at dusk brave women were seen passing along the streets, bearing their lamps, — brave women, for as they went the profane jeered at them as "foolish virgins." The term was not well chosen, for they had oil in their vessels with their lamps, — the oil which had not failed since Margaret Shepard walked in its light.

A new society was formed which should take the place of the parish, and very soon the purpose was carried out to erect another meeting-house for themselves. Neighboring churches gave them assistance, and soon the old church and new society were able to begin their work. It happens often in this world that life turns upon itself, and we come back to places to which we were once accustomed. So they retraced the path which led to the river,

and to the place where the log meeting-house had been. In two centuries the house had been removed, and its place was covered. But near by, just over the way, was a lot of land which a kind woman of the church gave to them, and there they builded their house. It was a large building for them and for their ability, but it was suited to their wants, and was not without taste. Washington Allston drew the plan for the tower, and the tradition is preserved that he liked to take strangers at evening to a spot a hundred rods from the building, and, asking his companions to mark the simple beauty of the unassuming structure, to repeat the familiar lines, —

“ If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight.”

There the official ministry of the venerable and venerated Abiel Holmes came to a close, although he lived until 1837. His last years were years of usefulness and peace, but he felt deeply the pathos of this closing period of a long life. The manuscript of his farewell sermon is preserved. The text was this: “ For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” It was full of affectionate advice and blessing. The impression was unspeakably touching, when after the sermon the aged man of God gave out for singing the 71st Psalm : —

“ God of my childhood and my youth,
The guide of all my days,
I have declar’d thy heavenly truth,
And told thy wondrous ways.

“ Wilt thou forsake my hoary hairs,
And leave my fainting heart ?
Who shall sustain my sinking years,
If God, my strength, depart ?

“ The land of silence and of death
Attends my next remove ;
O, may these poor remains of breath
Teach the wide world thy love ! ”

He died in charity with the world. To a friend who bent over him on the last night he gave indistinct utterance to his thought, and said that he wished his injuries written in sand. On the day of his death the bells of the town were tolled in recognition of his work and in tribute to his memory. He was a minister of the old school, an historical scholar of wide repute, a gentleman full of courtesy and kindness, a Christian in whom the steadiness of faith was blended with the gentleness of love. Some who were children in his day now recall his kindly manner toward them, and like to tell how, as he walked the street with his well-remembered cane, he would pause at a group of school-children, and with a pleasant question and a word of counsel, would draw from his capacious

pocket a handful of confectionery, which he distributed among the expectant listeners. And they tell how he stood before the pulpit a few weeks before his death, and gave a book to each of the members of the Sabbath-school as they passed before him. No one can look upon the placid face of the good man without feeling respect for one who had served his generation so faithfully and had carried himself so graciously through his long life.

A young man, fresh from the seminary, had been made the associate of the old minister, and he became his successor. His ministry here was of importance, but was very brief. After less than five years he left the town to become the minister of a church in Boston. This is noteworthy, as the only instance in two hundred and sixty years in which a minister has left this church to become the pastor of another. On his retirement another minister was called, who for thirty years rendered distinguished service, not only to his own people, but to the town and to the churches through the State. Then there came to the church a minister who remains until now in his place. He found the meeting-house pleasant and convenient, although too small, after having been three times enlarged. He found a strong body of men, a very compact and well-ordered congregation.

Perhaps the experiences through which the church had passed had given it the habit of self-respect and self-reliance. There were men strong in the law, eminent in science, prominent in business, with honorable women not a few. There were younger men coming forward to administer the growing enterprise of the church, and the young life was starting up which gave promise of new energy. But it was very clear that the church could not remain in the meeting-house which it occupied. It turned back once again, and pausing near the college purchased a piece of ground which seems to have been reserved for its use. The Washington elm was growing before it, and over the street was the field where the soldiers of the Revolution had their tents, while just beyond were the buildings of the college. A skillful foresight had secured the place, and very soon there rose upon it a meeting-house very large and convenient, imposing in its architecture and generous in all its appointments. Upon its lofty spire is the proud cockerel who from 1721 watched above the houses of Boston. To this new house the church removed in 1872; there it has had its home, and with its steadily enlarging congregation, with students from two colleges, with strangers from many places, it has done its work for the people who have come within its gates, for the community

about it, for the country in whose beginning it shared, and for the wide world committed to its care. The membership of the church from the seven of Thomas Shepard's day has come to be more than seven hundred who are banded together in devotion to the ancient faith, and in the fellowship of the ancient covenant. In the history of the church there are many events in which the good hand of God is very plainly discerned, — events which would not be out of place if an extension were to be made of the Acts of the Apostles and they were included. That Providence which was in the beginning has been the sun and shield of the church from its first days; and with confidence in God's purposes the church, now strong and full of spirit, looks willingly down the waiting years.

But what does all this mean? It means that the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints" has been preserved and has been preached as it had been received and trusted by those who were called here to make the church of God. We have connected the history with the six meeting-houses, but each house has been more than a dwelling-place; it has been the testimony of the people to God. The walls, the spire, the bell, declare his glory, and one who looks intelligently upon the house thinks of God. It has been the home of the

Christ whose name is upon the church of God. The meeting-house has been the place wherein He could meet his people, speak to them, comfort them, impart to them of his own life, send them out to minister to others. The meeting-house is the home of the young who are brought to it, where they are taught and trained in truth and service and made ready for the time when the church shall be in their hands. The meeting-house is the place of memorial, the home of those who live with God. They have their separate homes, but only in the house of God are they brought together where each generation can hold fellowship with those that have passed on. It is due to them, and to those who have entered into their work, that the names of those that have gone to their reward should keep their place. Friendship is too sacred to be lost, honor is too costly to be denied remembrance. There rises upon the banks of the Danube the Valhalla with all its splendor, where Germany preserves in statue and bust and name those who have lived to make Germany great. It is well that the meeting-house should be such a place, where men may live together and those who remain may be in fellowship with them. If it were for nothing else the meeting-house which is old enough to have a history will find ample reason for its being in that it

furnishes a place for the communion of saints who are on earth and who are in heaven. The house becomes endeared when familiar forms are seen walking through the aisles, when silent voices are heard in the old hymns, and vanished hands clasp our own, — the forms, the voices, the hands of friends loved long since and never lost. And for ourselves, for those who live to-day, our meeting-house is our home. It becomes us to make its worship sincere in spirit and in truth; to keep its service constant; to cherish its divine comfort; to make its companionship complete, till it shall be, in very truth, the house of God, where we may find Him, and find ourselves, and sit in heavenly places; and the gate of heaven, through which our praise and prayer and treasure may ascend, through which eternal blessings may come to us. Soon and there will be no meeting-house, for in that world of light and love toward which we hasten there is no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. God grant that we may come to it! Meantime, let us prepare for it, become familiar with its service, learn its songs of rejoicing, anticipating the glory and delight of those larger mansions in our Father's house. It may be that there we shall recall the days spent upon the earth, the communion of the

church in its familiar places ; and perhaps when we walk by the River of the Water of Life, and praise God and the Lamb, we may pleasantly remember the place by the river-side, “where prayer was wont to be made.”

X

THE PLACE OF THE PRAYER

LUKE vi. 12

THE PLACE OF THE PRAYER

THE life of our Lord was a life of giving. It needed to be also a life of receiving. It brings us very close to his great divine and human life, that we find Him at the end of a weary day spending the night in gathering strength for the work which was before Him. He had been teaching in Capernaum, and from all the land the people in their need had gathered about Him. They had come from other parts of Galilee, from Judea, from Jerusalem, from distant Edom, from Tyre and Sidon, and every one brought a necessity which nowhere else could be helped. They thronged about Him, they touched Him, they besought Him; and men with evil spirits fell at his feet, crying, "Thou art the Son of God." He healed many, and when He could no longer endure what was cast upon his willing heart He asked his disciples to bring a boat that He might take refuge in it, and from its security He spoke to the people standing upon the shore. At length the end came, and leaving the throng, and leaving his friends, He

went up into the mountain and spent the whole night in prayer. He needed to pray. Strong though He was, He had still his need. At the well of Samaria He needed to rest, for his weariness was as real as ours has ever been, and it was in a real thirst that he said to the woman, "Give me to drink." There were times when angels came and ministered to Him. But not rarely, constantly He lived in prayer. Many times He was found at prayer, but commonly it was in secret. He prayed at the grave of Lazarus, when his sympathy had taken the sorrow of his friends upon his life. He prayed in Gethsemane, when his agony was upon Him; and at the last Passover, beneath the shadow of the Cross, He breathed out the prayer which is the most sacred portion of the sacred Scriptures. It belonged to his humiliation, it was a part of his true manhood, to pray, and to Him came the strength He sought. From the night upon the mountains He came refreshed to his friends, and from his disciples chose twelve who should attend Him, and henceforth there were thirteen, less one, who were bearing his name through the land.

The lesson is a very simple one. He who would have the Christ life must needs have the Christ strength, and he who would have this must seek it in Christ's way. He went up into the mountain

and continued all night in prayer to God. It is no reflection upon us, or upon the world, that we have this constant necessity. It was never meant that the world should give us all that we require, or that we should find within ourselves the strength which we must embody in our life. It was never meant that men should be self-supporting, or should find in the world which they rule the rest and strength which the world needs to receive from them. As well wonder that the tree must reach out its branches for the sunshine, or send down its roots to the water-springs, as that man must look beyond himself for light and life. Let us be reasonable. If we were of the world, the world should care for us ; because we are of God, God will care for us. Because Christ's work is given to us, Christ's strength will be given to us. Because we are branches, the vine will furnish our life ; only like the vine himself, whose branches we are, we must look to the husbandman for the life which we can transform into grapes.

He who has made us thus dependent invites us to ask of Him what we would have, to seek from Him what the world would have from us. "It is the comfort of our littleness that He is great." Thus God makes our weakness into strength, and from our dependence ordains the sacrament of help, which He will keep with us.

This rule of life has been many times proved by those who had desires for goodness and for usefulness. Prayer is the expression of the child's simplicity and trust, and in our manhood those who prove it find it faithful, and many turn to it when the burden of life is heavy, and the way is weary. It was very touching, a few days ago, to hear the soldier with the empty sleeve speak of the great leader who has lately been carried to his rest. He visited him when the hand of death was on him, when his throat was muffled, and he could not clearly speak. He reminded him of his great service. He told him that the country would hold him always in grateful remembrance; then the muffled voice interrupted him, and with eagerness he turned to one of whose piety he was as certain as of his courage, — "Howard, tell me more about prayer."

It has ruled great lives, this coming to God for help. It has made men of gentle lives, quiet, patient, refined. We have followed them along the streets, sure that they were on errands of mercy, and when we have returned with them we have soon found them behind the closed door where they were with their Father, telling Him what they had seen and wrought, and praying for his blessing on their deeds. Great lives have borne great witness to the answer that comes to

prayer. I think that no one who has prayed steadily has long questioned the worth of his petitions. Prayer has been doubted, whether it were of good or not; but the doubt, if it has lasted, has been of those who have not prayed, or who have ceased to pray. Men can live without it, and be useful, and generous, and kind, and honest; but it were strange if any man could be so good as he ought to be, so strong as he needs to be, so wise as he could easily be, who does not follow the method of the gospel, and live in prayer. If our Lord himself needed to pray, surely all men need it. It is enough for the disciple to be as his master. His work was greater than ours, but our work is greater than our wisdom, or our strength, and is meant to be, for the strength is to be sought from above which will be equal to the day that is appointed for us. So are we taught. That we should pray, He was ever teaching who gave Himself for us, and bade us give ourselves to the world. If every other reason why we should pray failed us, there would be one reason remaining which no heart that trusts Him could ever put away: My Lord, my Saviour, prayed, and told me to pray. So long as I trust Him, I shall make my prayer as He has taught me.

It is a fine discovery that one makes when he learns that he can hold intercourse with God. Of

greater worth than to discover a planet is it to discover the right and faculty of prayer. Always there is something sublime in it which we should see if it were not so familiar. Think for a moment. That man yonder, making his prayer standing upon the earth, kneeling upon it, is separate from it; and his soul, at liberty, has found the heart of the Eternal, and they are communing together. How majestic are those simple lines in the old Scripture, "And Enoch walked with God;" "And the Lord talked with Moses." Here is the disclosure of our nature, which is like to God, so that we can understand Him, and know how to speak to Him. It is a disclosure of our relation to Him, that this fellowship belongs in his love to us and is the answer of our love to Him. We do few greater things than pray. He delights to listen to our voice, and to grant us our requests. To come into conscious intercourse with Him, so that our desires become known to Him through our naming of them, and are his desires, because they are our own, — this is to rise above ourselves into the grander life which lies beyond us and around us. What comfort there is in this, and what courage! It reinforces our faltering strength. It brightens the light where the oil is going out. It keeps the heart sensitive and brave. It is more than faith, for faith ministers to it. It holds faith,

but it goes beyond it. It has the greater privilege. Faith reaches up its hands and finds God above ; prayer drops its hands into the hands of God, stretched down to us. The higher the life becomes the more needful is it that we pray, in order that it may be perfected. The more easy is it to pray when our life has advanced toward its completeness. As the high mountains are more readily ascended than those that are lower, because they give us broken crags, points of rock that our hands may lay hold upon, ledges where the foot may place itself, and not the smooth, rounded sides of the hills beneath them ; so when we attempt a great ascent in goodness, even to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, to glorify Him upon the earth and to finish his work, and we have gone our way rising above our life, it will be even more easy and more delightful, as it is more needful, to take the last step, where we shall stand upon the summit of our manhood, and broaden our vision of the heaven and the earth. When we have come really into the knowledge of God, and have felt his hand upon our head, and his breath upon our brow, and there has been kindled within us a new aspiration, we cannot find content till we have found Him ; and we find Him when, as our Lord did, we lift our eyes to heaven, and pray. Then from the heaven comes the answer of his grace.

Do you not think that it is an ungracious, almost heartless thing, to withhold our prayer because we doubt if any good can come to us if we should pray? Could we not talk with God, even if we were not paid for it? Is it nothing that we are able and are permitted to speak with God? It is not true that prayer does not bring a blessing which otherwise we should not have. It is true, and the very word of Christ, that they who ask shall receive, and they who seek shall find. It is true, and the very word of Christ, that they who are to do his will must find strength where He found it. But even if it were not so, that any gain which we can measure comes to us, still the true heart would come to God, were it for nothing but the delight of being there with Him. It is a mercantile spirit which tries to set the rules of bargaining into the spiritual life. This spirit of working for rewards, which brings figures into affections, has always wrought havoc with religion. We do better to trust our hearts in those things which are truest in a man who bears the likeness of his Maker. But one says, "God is love. He knows what I need, and He will give it without my asking." It is true that God is love, and therefore that He will not give his best gifts without our asking. The best gifts must be taken as well as offered. The rain comes upon us whether

we care for it or not, but grace does not thus come. We can be rained upon without our will, but we cannot be loved upon till we consent. Love is not thrown at us, as a ball is thrown against a fence, to bound back into the hands that sent it. Love must be taken into the willing heart, for there is no love apart from willingness; neither can we feel the Divine Spirit entering into our spirit and there working his will, unless in our liberty we consent to have it so. It makes a great difference whether the scholar wishes to learn or not. If the teacher and the scholar have one desire, then the lesson will be learned. It was an illiterate thought that a teacher "learns" a scholar his lesson. He teaches, the boy must needs do the learning for himself. Prayer is the turning of the heart to God, opening it, welcoming the intercourse with God, receiving the Divine breath, the inspiration, the power of the Divine Life. Why is it that the gospel in all its course is never the thrusting of mercy upon us, but the appeal to open our hearts and receive it, and live in its truth? "Come unto me, and I will give," is the spirit of the gospel. I do not know how much there might be given to us if we did not pray. I do not want to know. I think I might endure to have it so, that to be blessed needed no prayer; and yet I fear lest the heart should be hardened, thankfulness should

be excluded, and selfishness should be even easier than it is under the ordinance of God; lest if it found me very rich, I might draw within myself and gather my wealth about me, as sometimes a merchant, when he has sufficient gain, retires from business. And what could be more dreary, more desolate, more heartless, more dreadful, than that a man's intercourse with God should be interrupted, — that intercourse which dependence graciously encourages. Far better were it that we should be impoverished while still keeping the privilege of prayer, thus keeping God, than that we should have an untold wealth and should be separated from Him. If I could ever do without the help of my friend, I can never do without my friend. I would rather have my friend in his poverty than to have his wealth without his heart. Anything were better than to have no God in our thought and love, and it were hazardous to be so independent that we should not be held under bonds we could not break to bring our prayer to Him. To walk with God, to have God talk with us, this is life, and herein is prayer. It is a beautiful picture given of it, whose meaning we cannot miss, in that gentle saying of the gospel, "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved." That is prayer. Cherish the delight of it, rejoice in the strength of it.

“O holy trust ! O endless sense of rest !
Like the beloved John
To lay his head upon the Saviour’s breast,
And thus to journey on ! ”

What shall we say concerning the method of prayer? There is no method, there is no rule, no form which we must always keep. Life cannot run in lines, but is free, like love. It is beautiful, this vision of our Lord after that weary day. He parted from men, and slowly, quietly, went up the mount; the world receded beneath Him, and heaven drew nearer. At last He was far enough above the world, and close enough to heaven. Then He prayed. The night wore on, and still He prayed. I think there is no more sublime sight we have of Him than when we see Him in the dimness of that night, when only the stars looked down upon Him where He lay at rest, on the bosom of the Eternal Love. It was as if his spirit had gone out and had found the Eternal Spirit, the Father, who had given Him to the world, and there, resting, prayed. Not so fine as this is the glory of the Transfiguration, for when upon Hermon his face was radiant, and his garments glistened, it was Moses and Elias who talked with Him. On this unnamed mount it was God. I think there is nothing more sacred, — no place where we would more readily put off our

shoes from off our feet, where we would cover our eyes if they dared to search the twilight, in all the way from Bethlehem, where He was born, to Olivet, from whose height He returned into heaven. The Son of God, alone with the Father, through the long night, between two days of sacrifice, — I cannot think of anything upon the earth more beautiful and holy than that. All the night He continued in prayer; yet He was not asking all the night, or speaking. Sometimes He spoke, but oftener He was still, simply staying there thinking, feeling, receiving, resting, in the fellowship of the heavenly Love. When the morning broke, strengthened and comforted, He returned into the world. That mountain was his closet, and the door was shut. No one, not those who loved Him best, would venture near Him. It was the heavenly moment; it was eternity. The soul of Christ was one with the spirit of the Father.

Let us bring his own deed into his own teaching as it reaches our life. Enter into thy closet, He said, thine inner chamber. Close the door. Let no voices from the world find you. Yet carry the world's need and your own want into the solitude, and there wait with God. Take time for this communion. Hours are well spent when they are spent with Him. Some things can be hurried; prayer must be deliberate. There are times, in-

deed, when suddenly we cry out, as the sinking Peter prayed, "Lord, save me;" times when out upon the street, in the strife and strain of daily life, with the confusion of the earth about us, we pray in brief sentences, in single words, without words, and the prayer is true and acceptable with God. But that we may pray instinctively, when some necessity surprises us, we must have our mind trained to ready worship; and if we are to pray amid the noises of the earth, we need to have schooled ourselves in the quietness of the closet. We must take time to find ourselves, to think upon our wants, to know what things we have to make confession of, what petitions best become our day; what wants there are without, in the house, in the church, in the world, far away where the lone workman builds for God, or the apostle in the strange land proclaims the Father's love, the Saviour's grace. We must take time to know ourselves, to make ourselves conscious of God's presence, to let the spirit free itself from all that would detain it, and thus to rest in God. The closet favors this gathering together of our thoughts. It is true that God is everywhere, but we are not everywhere. Let us ask for that we need, or better, for that God knows we need. Let us ask that our will may rise to his will, and our wishes find contentment in his purposes. Let us

ask, careful of our words, yet not fearful of mistake if so the heart be reverent, for He who has bidden us speak to Him can change the manner of our speaking and give to our desires a better answer than they thought of. We are taught that we may come boldly ; but the boldness is not in ourselves, but in his understanding of us, of our sincerity and submission and necessity. We are alone with God, yet we are not alone, for He is there who taught us our first prayer and our last, who is our friend and God's, our Intercessor, and we shall pray the better if our eyes are fixed on Him, and we rest in his gracious mediation. It was the beautiful habit in the heart of the great English preacher, when he prayed, to lay his Greek Testament open on the chair before him, that between him and the unseen Love with which he held communion might be the blessed life which revealed itself along the words which He had spoken. Thus can we always have the strengthening of our faith, the purifying of our desires, the commending of our requests, the gathering in of our blessings, if we pray with our minds and hearts resting in Him who brings us where we rest in God.

I cannot help the thought which grows steadily upon me, — I would not part with it unless I were compelled, — that the better part of prayer is

not the asking, but the kneeling where we can ask, the resting there, the staying there, drawing out the willing moments in heavenly communion with God, within the closet, with the night changed into the brightness of the day by the light of Him who all the night was in prayer to God. Just to be there, at leisure from ourselves, at leisure from the world, with our souls at liberty, with our spirit feeling its kinship to the Divine Spirit, with our life finding itself in the life of God, — this is prayer. Would it be possible that one could be thus with God, listening to Him, speaking to Him, reposing upon his love, and not come out with a shining face, a gladdened heart, an intent more constant and more strong to give to the waiting world which so sadly needs it what has been taken from the heart of God? Then, He who has led us into the closet and patiently waited with us there will lead us down the mountain where our work lies, God's work. The vine will cling to the branch, even as the branch holds fast to the vine whose life it constantly takes, whose life it has strongly taken in the night of prayer. He will lead us on through our life beyond the world, up into the mansions of the Father's house which are prepared for us, where all the air will be full of worship, and all the light will be the glory of God and of the Lamb, and there still, and for-

ever, we shall find the closet where with God we can be alone, though saints and angels sing beyond the door. It has been said that there will be no prayer in heaven. I cannot think that it is true. Certainly there is prayer in heaven now, for there the High Priest makes intercession for us. There will always be prayer. They who think that prayer means restlessness, and unhappiness, and is wholly the cry of sorrow and of pain, may well say that there will be no prayer in heaven; but they who think that prayer is intercourse with God, being where He is, rejoicing in the communion with Him, may well believe the prayer shall be forever. We shall not pray all the night, for there is no night there, but all the day. Where the moments are centuries, and we live in the celestial brightness, our very glory will be the longing for more glory; our joy will reach out for more delight; our songs will strive to be sweeter and louder, and songs and joy and glory will find their worth in this, that we can carry them within the inner chamber, and there worship God in that which He has given to us. Prayer will become praise, we used to say; but praise is prayer, for praise is being in the presence of God, thanking Him, and longing for more thankfulness, for more holiness, and the very thought of Him will quicken our desire more and more to please Him, as we

move on and on to that vision which the man saw who in the paschal chamber rested on the Saviour's breast, and taught us afterward that from being beloved of God, and being his children, we shall ascend to loftier heights, for when He shall appear whom our hearts love, and we shall look upon Him in the eternal vision, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him, even as He is; and till that is perfected, our very likeness to Him will be the desire for the perfecting of the image, and our Christlike life will be our Christlike prayer.

“More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. For what were men, . . .
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

XI

THE VIRTUE OF CLEAN HANDS

JOB xvii. 9

THE VIRTUE OF CLEAN HANDS

THERE was a doctrine much enjoyed by our fathers which they called “The perseverance of the saints.” It rested upon the belief that one who had entered upon the Christian life and had been born of God would be faithful to the end. This was encouraged by the confidence of the apostle that He who has begun a good work in the hearts of men will carry it to perfection, and by the assurance of our Lord that He would abide with his friends, and by his prayer that they might be kept from the evil of the world and brought where they should behold his glory. The doctrine might have been entitled, therefore, the continuance of grace, or, again, the constancy of love. The truth which is expressed is full of comfort for times of discouragement, and of inspiration in all the difficulty of the Christian way. Certainly every man ought so to live that the doctrine shall be a part of his daily thought.

We come upon this teaching in the ancient Scriptures. We find Job confessing his faith in

this wise : “ The righteous, also, shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” In this he was asserting his own rectitude, while he complained of his accusers and made his appeal to God. In the midst of his passionate sentences he declared the constancy of the good man. In spite of all that he saw in himself, and after his sad experience, he cherished this assurance ; and passing beyond himself he gave the statement the general form in which we have it. There is nothing strange in it, as we read it ; although there may come to mind many instances in which the righteous has not held on his way. But why should he not keep to his fidelity, free from the vicissitudes of life as the planet is beyond the clouds which the wind drives beneath it ? Rectitude is from above, and should last. It is commended by conscience, and should be retained. It holds the eternal sanction, and should engage the entire life.

The word “hands” is a large one. It is used for the man, oftentimes ; as when we speak of the “hands” on a ship or in the factory. It is the symbol of a varied helpfulness, as in the phrase which has become familiar, “Lend a hand.” It is the outside of conduct, whose purposes and motives are in the heart. It is with the hand that we touch the world, and do our work for it. The heart is

disclosed by the hand. We make ourselves known to ourselves by what we do, and we are judged among our neighbors rather by our conduct than by our words. There is precedent for this, as when Christ taught that to say "Lord," and "Lord," would not be a title for acceptance, but to have done the will of his Father who is in heaven. Hence there is a constant call for clean hands which do no unworthy thing, but are set in useful deeds. It is by no means meant that clean hands are enough. They have their value as the sign of a clean heart, where the thoughts and intentions are right. Together with our Lord's teaching of the worth of good conduct, his highest Beatitude is given to the pure in heart, "They shall see God." Clean hands are not empty hands. They are not satisfied in keeping from the wrong, but only in doing that which is right. They are more than innocent, for they are virtuous. It is little that they do not harm the world, for they are made to help it. An empty hand is a selfish hand, and this is the expression of a selfish soul. The purity of a man is more than the purity of a child, because it is invested in manly deeds. The ideal of a good man is not a statue of Italian marble, spotless and white. It is rather a sailor with the lines of his vocation crossing his hands, or the farmer who bears upon his palms the marks of his high calling. Cleanness is purity and virtue.

There are many passages in the Bible in which the importance of right conduct is asserted in the strongest terms. "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" These are popular passages; but while their importance cannot be overstated, it is to be kept in mind that they are by no means the entire teaching of God. They are spoken against formality, against content with prayers, and sacrifices, and offerings, and all the outward acts which are connected with religion. The tendency was, as it is to-day, to give great carefulness to observances, and to find content in them, even while they were not consistent with the tenor of the life, and came from an imperfect idea of that which is acceptable to God, and were liked because of the great readiness with which service could be rendered, compared with the exertion which was needed in keeping the heart right with God. The passages have been read from their surface too often, while the mind has not entered into the depths of the words. Surely they are

hard enough, as any one would find who should attempt to change them into his own behavior. To walk in all our ways according to the commandments of God is sufficient for any man's strength. Men have at times turned to these vigorous sentences and admired them, because, as they said, there was no creed in them. What could be more thoughtless than that? They contain a creed definite and strict. It is a great confession for a man to make in sincerity: "I believe in God, whom I ought to serve and to love with all my heart and mind and strength." A creed can hardly go further than this, if one includes in the confession the whole will of God, the entire compliance with his words. We cannot take refuge in thinking of the requirements of God as they were given in the Old Testament. They are to be read in the light of our own day, and heard in the teaching of Him who came from heaven. If we regard them truly we do not limit them, and they cover the Sermon on the Mount and all the teachings of the Son of God. The Old Testament is the tree in blossom, the New Testament is the tree in fruit; and he who gathers what the tree gives gathers the fruit. The early commandment is unfolded in the later, and becomes more spiritual, and makes a stronger appeal to the soul of the man, and no one has rightly regarded it who does not receive it in its

completeness. It is not a transition, it is an advance, when we pass without halting from the law that was given by Moses, in which the grace and truth were inclosed, to the grace and truth given by Christ, in which the law that is the will of God abides unchanged forever.

The beginning of the right heart and the clean hands is in the recognition of God. From this comes the vigor of the life. It is this which, in the highest sense, constitutes a man. In these declarations of our duty, given by God and readily accepted by good men, is the statement of the relation between God and man. It is for Him to direct, and for us to obey ; not because of his power, not alone because He is our Maker, but because He is right, and the right has the right to rule. Because his commandments announce the best in purpose and in conduct, they are to be obeyed. The only adequate expression of the right is in the life and the truth of God. When they speak and we listen, we have entered upon the life which is honorable for us, and has the exceeding great reward. It is not doing that which is good because it is pleasing or profitable or remunerative, but because it is right ; not because it is the commandment, but because it is in the nature and spirit of the Eternal, — it is this which is duty in its highest form as religion. To hold this as the principle of

our life gives to us a constant rule, a divine guidance, and an accomplishment which shall bring honor and content.

In this thought of God at the beginning of our life, and in the purpose steadily to do those things which are pleasing in his sight, we have the answer to all our necessary questioning, and are raised from the uncertainty which adheres to our own judgment into the certainty which belongs to the ways of God. One who knows himself, and feels the sacredness of life, and understands the world, and looks into the eternities, is well aware of his need of instruction and control, and turns gratefully to One who is able by his counsel to guide him, and afterward to receive him into glory. If we can imagine a fine ship, well equipped and with its sails filled with the wind, conscious of what it needs that it may make its voyage in safety, employing the tempest and ruling the waves, we can think of it in all its pride and daring calling for chart and compass, praying for a sailor-man to become its master, to trace its course, to lay his hand of authority upon its helm. A man who knows how great he is, and desires safety, and aspires to success, if he be wise looks beyond himself for the law which he is to obey, for the spirit which he is to embody, and gladly lifts his eyes to the heavens and prays that God will be the master

of his liberty, and by his ordinance make freedom into accomplishment, fulfilling the intent which is cherished. The right apprehension of law magnifies its goodness and its kindness. It is not to be feared, for it is the Father's will; it is not to be slighted, for it is wisdom in words; it is to be obeyed, for it is the thought of Him in whose hands our life is and our breath, and whose are all our ways. Richard Hooker's sentence so many times repeated we may with advantage recall to our minds once more: "Law has her seat in the bosom of God; her voice is the harmony of the world." Law comes to us as light, and we walk in the law, as in the light. We do not make it, we accept it. We do not add to its authority by agreeing to it. Men fear to declare the purpose of obedience, lest it should bind them more firmly than they wish, or as if there were liberty in disregarding duty. This is a folly we should not be guilty of. Duty maintains its integrity, whether we answer it with our obedience or not. There are obligations which we can make or refuse to make, but to obey the commandment of God is not one of these. If we have contracted a debt, we do not make it more binding by giving a note. The parent's duty to care for his children would not be enhanced if he should give them a writing confessing it. To receive the teaching of Holy Scripture does not make the

truth which is in it, or make its requirements more binding upon us. There have been those who refused to confess Christ before men, as He requires, lest they should take upon themselves duties they might become unwilling to perform ; but the duties are there, whatever they may do, and to have made the confession is by so much to have lessened the number of things which they ought to do. Think for a moment in what confusion we should be left if this were not true, if one could escape a duty by declining to acknowledge it, and life were thus made dependent upon our preference and not upon the will of God. There is no abatement of responsibility granted to those who stand aloof from Christ and the church. What would be stranger than to put a premium upon the refusal to do, or to intend to do, the will of God ?

The principle which we are considering becomes more clear if we see it in our Lord himself, who renewed for us the commandment of God, while He gave forgiveness for the past neglect of it, and imparted strength for the obedience which was asked. He bade men see in Him the Lord and the Redeemer, and to follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. This was to be through all our years, and forever. In the constant light and force which He would give the righteous should hold on their way, constant in faith and following,

in the spirit and deed which would be expended in the coming centuries when He should lead his flock by the River of Life, and they should go with Him in the increasing blessedness. We shall do well if we enlarge our confidence in his leading, and our belief that we can follow Him ; if we rise to the obedience of God, sure that it is right and possible, knowing that the word is with power, and that divine help comes with the need of help, thus changing timidity to faith, and lifting our errant lives into the ways of God. This is right. If at any point we should fail, it will be honorable in us that we fail believing in ourselves and in God ; meaning, with an honest purpose to which we will cleave forever, to fear the Lord and to walk in his commandments.

Let us return for a moment to the confidence of the afflicted man of the elder day. It was not alone that the righteous should hold on his way, but "he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." We readily believe this, if we believe in his continuance in well-doing ; for every consideration brings to the words a true confirmation. Upon the man who hath clean hands the favor of God shall abide. Read the first Psalm. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly ; but his delight is in the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree planted by the

rivers of water, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper;" and the fifteenth Psalm: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness. He that doeth these things shall never be moved;" and the twenty-fourth Psalm: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." Here is a verse from the Chronicles: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

But the powers of the man himself are in healthful exercise. The whole man is working by a rule which engages all his faculties, and here, as in all exercise, these should become great by use. His benevolence should increase by benevolent deeds; his truth become clearer and firmer by compliance with it, and the entire man move upward toward the measure of the stature of the fullness of Him who was perfect. With this will stand also the favor of men. Marking his integrity, they will employ him, advance him to places of honor, give to him the opportunity to use himself and by service to become robust. The confidence of men is encouragement for him, and encouragement is enlargement. He cannot be sure of holding high office, but he has the dignity of ruling himself, of

keeping his life in the control of his conscience. He may not be certain that he shall leave a large estate in the world which he quits. There are so many things in the complexity of business life which work together for the increase of wealth, it is quite possible that to this man of scrupulous honor there may not come silver and gold. It is quite certain that he will have enough, and that the treasure which is of chief account in his own estimation he will carry with him to the land where henceforth he is to reside. A man's riches should last a hundred years at least, and bear transportation from world to world. These riches will be his. His virtue will tend to plenty, and promote contentment, and bestow a healthful pleasure.

To him there will be given a larger manhood, and more weight of character ; and character is strength. There will be the comfort of an approving conscience ; and in this is strength. His gains will be worth more because there is no stain upon them. He can enjoy them without restraint, because no one has been wronged for his advantage, or become poor for his enrichment. In his own heart, in his hands, will be the foundation of hope. For what ground for hope shall be so sure as this, that he has done the will of God, and has kept himself unspotted from the world? He will not suffer his hope to be lessened, nor believe that dis-

appointment may await him. It is not pride, it is intelligence, with gratitude, by which a good man feels that he has done well, and that for himself, as oftentimes he has told other men, the end of righteousness must be blessedness. There can be little in life which is worth the having unless there be the consciousness that it has been deserved. Our great poet did not go far beyond the reality when he said that he thought a man would rest more quietly in his grave if he knew that the bare truth was written on the headstone. To know that the bare truth is honorable might well deepen the quietness of the repose. It is the man of clean hands whom God will employ in His service upon the earth. He alone takes what God can give, and what the world most needs. The bread with which the multitudes were fed came from the boy into the clean hands of Christ, and by the honest hands of men who followed Him was given to the multitudes around them. Recall his own words: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." And St. Paul's description of the useful man, as a "vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Men whom Christ has called to be his followers He sends into the world, even as He was sent, to

do greater works than his, with clean hands that grow stronger and stronger.

Thus is the righteous man set in with the great forces of the Almighty. He is in league with the right. He lives in the purpose of God. He shares in the divine triumph; and knows within himself, and gives in his witness to the world, the perseverance of a saint.

XII

THE MAN AND THE VOTE

ACTS xxvi. 10

THE MAN AND THE VOTE

To be allowed to express our opinion in regard to public affairs is a costly privilege. It may not have cost us anything, but others have purchased this freedom for us with a great price. To be free-born is our inheritance. To have an opinion which we desire to express is a sign of manhood. For a vote is the expression of the man's opinion, and of his desire which he wishes to have accomplished in the community, and therefore of his character which stands around his judgment and his wish. A vote is a thought in action. It needs intelligence and virtue, a wise and upright character. It needs honesty, and the public spirit which enables a man to pass beyond his personal interests and to regard the well-being of the state. It needs the unselfishness and generosity which in this form become the nobler excellence which we call patriotism. This is especially true because others with their wishes and their interests are involved with us; because the country is affected by our principles; not alone the country of our

day, but the country of our fathers which has been bequeathed to us, and the country which is put in trust with us for those who are to enter into our labors. The freeman's act bequeathed by freemen is a fine bequest to those who in their turn are entitled to liberty. There is great dignity in the words of one of our neighbors, many times repeated : —

“ The freeman casting with unpurchased hand
The vote that shakes the turrets of the land.”

The vote, therefore, is to be esteemed of highest value, and to be kept sacred in all places.

They are very impressive words which St. Paul spoke when he was upon his trial before King Agrippa. He was defending his integrity, and in doing this he recalled the evil days when he persecuted those with whom afterwards he rejoiced to be identified, and with whom he was content to suffer. “ I shut up many of the saints in prisons,” he confessed, “ and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them.” The words as he spoke them are even more bold and expressive. It was the custom in those times to vote with pebbles ; in the ancient courts of justice a white stone was for acquittal and a black stone for conviction. “ When these men and women, these saints, were before the courts, I threw down a black stone,” he said. Whether he did this as

a member of the Sanhedrim or of some lesser tribunal, or whether he meant only that he gave his voice against the imperiled Christians, we do not know; but we do know that long afterward he felt that their suffering and death was in his measure to be charged upon him. He did not bind them with chains; he did not stone them; but he threw down the black pebble which was the expression of his opinion regarding them and their cause, and the putting forth of his desire concerning their fate. The man went with the vote. From this responsibility he was too honorable to withdraw. He was too honest even to conceal it when no one accused him.

It cannot be too deeply impressed upon the people whose affairs are entirely in their own hands that to vote is a very solemn act. In our own country more than anywhere else is this liberty to have an opinion and to declare it to be cherished and employed. We are set to the making of a republic in which every man shall have an equal right with every other man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the right to say what the nation shall be. Such honor rests upon the citizen of this composite Republic. He should feel the greatness of his task, and bring to it all the wisdom he can gain, all the integrity he possesses, all the generosity he can acquire, that the Republic

may have the full benefit of his enlightened and untrammelled manhood. The interests committed to us are most weighty, for ourselves and for those who will stand in our places when we have gone, and for the world, for the great family of men entitled to freedom and longing for it. It is the cause of manhood which is on trial here. Every man should feel the seriousness of his position and bring the full force of his character to the advancement of the common good. The nation must have citizens intelligent and virtuous if men from so many lands are to dwell in prosperity together. We cannot feel this too deeply. We have advanced beyond the period of formation. "E Pluribus Unum" no longer means "Out of many states one nation," but "Out of many nations one state." The days that we are passing through are as really critical as any that have gone. We have made no serious mistake, taken no backward step. From the colonies to the Republic and on to the Republic without slavery, we have steadily and not very slowly moved. But this has been the work of good men, and in a large degree it has been accomplished, as it must be completed, by the free-man's vote. The early settlers in Massachusetts Bay sought to provide good citizenship by providing good men. Their test of patriotic virtue which made it a part of religion, which must be firmly

held and bravely confessed, has been relinquished, and no one would restore it. A test which required the citizen to be a member of the church would be perilous to the state, and more perilous to the church. But we can at least insist upon it, and enforce the principle by all the means within our power, that good men shall carry the Republic forward to the destiny of greatness and honor of which we freely boast.

It is very evident that the act of voting is not performed in a moment. It requires indeed but an instant to throw a stone into an urn, to cast a ballot into a box, or even to prepare the ballot that it may express our will. But the character which creates the act and controls it has been long in forming. It is the making, therefore, of the true principles of citizenship which is to be regarded even more than the simple act in which the character declares itself. We should be willing to meet the whole duty which is involved in expressing our desire. There are few duties to which a man is more firmly held by every consideration of honor than he is to the duty of voting. If a man is not willing to vote, whatever the cost may be, his place is not in a republic. There are countries to which he is well adapted. In Russia and Turkey he is not called upon to vote, and the fewer his opinions the greater the favor with which he is

regarded. But this is the land of freemen, a republic where the duty of government and the honor and opportunity of it are divided among the citizens in proportion to their ability to receive them and exercise them. In the same spirit it should be insisted upon that with all pains men should acquaint themselves with public affairs, should know what the country is, what it stands for, what is its place among the nations, and its duty to the world. The citizen should be familiar with our history, which is not too long nor too intricate to be known. He should understand the principles of free government, the rules of political life, and all which goes to the making of a man who at the ballot-box is the peer of every other man. We may stand apart at every other place and divide ourselves between the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the statesman and the citizen; but when we stand before the public urn, and choose and cast the pebble, we are not divided in duty or in privilege; we are on one plane, as the citizens, the makers and preservers of the nation. We felt this when we were called upon, not many years ago, to defend the union of the States, and to promote liberty in the land. Men came from all ranks into the army and the navy, and their distinctions were lost in the love of country, and they dared and died in a common honor

under the one flag, and they have to-day the homage of a grateful nation. Something is wanting in a man's self-respect and regard for liberty if he does not hold it as a privilege worth dying for, worth living for, to be the active citizen of the first true republic of the world, and to be able, peacefully and solemnly, to make known his desire and to have it reckoned in on equal terms with every other man's desire.

Let us remember that an election among us is not made in any one day, although for convenience we name certain hours when the ballots may be cast. The election itself is predetermined. It is a result. It is like the verdict upon a cause which has been for weeks on trial, and for years in making. Opinions, and still more character, are of slow growth. We are to instruct ourselves and one another in the principles and issues which are involved; then it takes but a moment to declare the results of our thinking. We sometimes call the weeks which precede an important election "a campaign of education." The term is well chosen, but unfortunately the campaign is too brief. If I may borrow a term from college life, it is very much like "cramming" for an examination. One who has neglected his studies may by this means survive the testing to which he is committed. The scholar depends upon nothing so

hasty and unjust, but upon the persistent work of the months which were given him for learning. To be constantly studying the duties of citizenship, and giving through the country the knowledge which is necessary to intelligent action, is the preparation for the voting-day.

"I, Freedom, dwell with Knowledge : I abide
With men whom dust of faction cannot blind
To the slow tracings of the Eternal Mind."

But we are always voting. We are always declaring our views and expressing our wishes. It is by means of this, and the sharing and combining of our opinions, that we enlarge our own wisdom and agree upon a policy which no single mind would have been likely to discover. It is simply the old proverb, "In a multitude of counselors there is safety." In the home, in the church, in the town, we are giving our voice for that which we approve. Even when we say nothing our silence is our ballot. Our presence or our absence is a vote. Our hand helping, hindering, doing nothing, is our vote. Parties are by no means limited to politics. There have been almost from the beginning two great parties in the world, God's and the other. There have been two great causes, the cause of the right and of the wrong; and every good man and every good act is a vote for goodness. Or we may vote upon the other

side. The question of honor and honesty in business, in professional life, in politics, in society, is always before us, and we vote every day. We can declare ourselves firmly and thoroughly for integrity, by being scrupulously upright, doing our duty, telling the truth, paying our debts, living generous lives.

Questions of reform are always before us, and we cast our vote for purity and safety, for the welfare of the poor, for the security of the helpless, for all which makes the common life more true and clean. Or by doing nothing, unless it be finding fault, we may vote upon the other side. The great question of thoughts versus things keeps itself before us. We may vote by our words, our spirit, our acts, for the things which are seen and temporal or for the truths which are eternal, though they be unseen. We can stand for those things which bring the kingdom of heaven closer to the earth, and quicken the spiritual nature, and make the rule of God prevail in all the affairs of men. One day in the week is especially voting-day. It is the day of the Lord, when by his commandment we are permitted to cease from labor, to hold the hours sacred, to enlarge our divine nature, to strengthen all our thoughts of God and immortality ; of Christ and his redemption ; of the eternal truth and eternal life which we can receive only

from his hands. The Lord's day means all this, and we vote every Sunday. It is a beautiful custom in our navy on this day to raise the flag which stands for Christ and the Christian life over that of the ship, the only one which at any time can float above the flag of the Republic. We can have this custom, if we choose, upon the shore. Which way should we vote? Let us inform ourselves of the value of the Sabbath to every man's home, its inestimable worth to the poor man and his dwelling, its worth to the neighborhood and to the country and to the wide world. Let us think of its divine sanction and authority. Think what it was to those whose memory is the most sacred recollection of our life, and what it will be as a formative influence in the life which in this day is cruelly prone to worldliness and the forgetfulness of God. We can preach the holiness of the Sabbath day. We can preserve its holiness in comfort, and rare enjoyment, and the refreshing of the body and the soul. The walk to the church is a long vote for the Fourth Commandment. It is in keeping with our New England history, with the teaching of prophets and apostles and of our Lord himself, and with a rational regard for our own welfare, to stand firmly on the side of the commandment. Our Lord did not remove the day when He found it burdened with superstition, but He set it free and put it in

order, because He clearly meant that it should stand to the end as God's day; and by his own Resurrection, which changed the hours of the week, He gave to the first day its lasting honor. It is certainly very beautiful, and in fine contrast to the spirit which disowns all that is of special sanctity in the day, when the household, parents and children, leaving their own door, walk quietly, reverently, to the common home, where with their neighbors they can worship God in prayer and song. The time has certainly come when all who believe in remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy should openly vote as they believe.

The prolonged vote is the real vote. Once in four years we vote for a president, but once in four hours for the country. Once in a year for the city government; once in an hour for the city. Always we are voting on the great issues between conscience and inclination, between duty and habit, between ministering to others and being ministered unto, between the march and the intrenchment. Upon these questions there is no third party, there is no silent party. Some one stands near enough to see our ballot; or if, perchance, there is no one, we see it ourselves, and He sees it who sat over against the treasury in the temple and watched the voting, and registered one ballot which was cast by a widow and expressed her life. You recall many

instances, and you pay honor to them, when men have had a life-long vote which they have left as a permanent force in the home and in the Republic. I wish that I knew how to impress this truth. Oh, men, which side are we on? What do we stand for? Is it for honor, truth, liberality? Is it for the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, the Golden Rule? Is it for God?

Men have been voting from the beginning. Adam and Eve and Cain voted on one side of the question of righteousness, and Abel upon the other side. Thus it was with Moses and Pharaoh, Joshua and Balaam, David and Solomon, Daniel and Belshazzar. Men have divided all along the course of life. There are records of special balloting, as when Moses found the people discontented, and disposed to turn away from him. He took his stand and called upon all who were with him to bring in their votes. The question was this, as it was announced: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me." This division of the house was in itself more satisfying than the conduct which followed it. So Joshua, when he had led the people to the borders of the land of promise, called upon them to vote who should bear rule over them. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." They made their choice, which many

of them soon denied. The Epistle to the Hebrews has the record of men who on the great questions of life voted, and so voted that they are held up for the encouragement of timid souls who would fain be faithful, to whom is given the triumph of righteousness. Among the men of the New Testament we find the voting. The Sanhedrim is against Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. We find the people voting on the grave question which Pilate submitted to them, "Whom shall I release unto you?" They voted for Barabbas, and gave Jesus to the Cross.

Yes, it is voting, all the way, and all the time. In the deep matters of life we are freemen, created free. The old question comes before every generation and every man anew, What shall I do with Jesus? What think ye of Christ? Our belief is our vote. Our confession is our vote for Him. Our baptism is our vote for Him into whose name, into whose grace, we are baptized. The questions of a Christian life are decided every hour. We can at least make our own ballot right. We may not prevail upon our neighbor. We may not control the opinions of others. We may not persuade them to do what we esteem their duty, but one thing every man can do, he can do his own duty and the whole of it. He can do it openly.

XIII

THE SAILOR-MAN

S. MATTHEW xvii. 27

THE SAILOR-MAN

THESE are the spring days, when the thoughts of many are turning toward the sea. Some are thinking of the winding coast along which they will run in their palace yachts. Some are preparing for voyages across the ocean, when in long days they may breathe in the vigor of the salt waves and winds, till they are landed among the mountains and lakes, the cities and cathedrals of a distant world. Some are turning curiously toward the North Cape and its unbroken day; others, fewer but bolder, are looking into the farthest North, if they may find the Pole, in which all believe but which no man has seen. The merchant is turning to the sea, that he may bring home the goods of other climes, upon which he may pay tribute and make his gain. The government is sending its envoys to the governments of distant nations; the missionary embarks upon the deep, that he may fulfill the command which inspires him, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Thus personal

comfort, the ardor for discovery, the necessities of government, the enterprise of the merchant, the passion of the missionary, bring them to the sea on which they will sail away. In all this which is proposed, there is one man and only one man who cannot be spared. There is one man whose place neither the statesman nor the merchant nor the discoverer can take. For the purposes of civilization, for the union of separate nations, for the evangelizing of the world, we look to one man. In all this varied work which sends us to the sea, the indispensable man is the sailor.

Surely it must be impressive to any one to think how far we are dependent upon the sailor. For the comforts which are in our homes, for the extending of our knowledge, for the fulfillment of our hopes for men and for the kingdom of God in the world, we turn to this one man. Thus, always, men have been looking toward the sea. It is not the prophet only who is found with his eyes ranging far beyond the line of the coast. The picture which is given to us of him may stand as the picture of all men whose vision has been wide and whose life has been large. It was a time when, for the iniquity of king and people, there had come upon Israel that long period of famine when for three years and six months the heavens were shut up, and there was no rain, and, there-

fore, no bread. Then the prophet challenged the priests of Baal to the contest with fire, wherein Jehovah and his prophet triumphed. He was confident that now there would come deliverance to the country in that the people turned, with hasty acclaim, from Baal to Jehovah. The prophet assured the king that rain was soon to come again. But let us read the story as it was written : —

“ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink ; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel ; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea.”

There was a long waiting and watching, but at last the servant returned with the glad message, “ There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” And soon above the sea the heaven became black with clouds and wind, and presently “ there was a great rain.” Thus always it has been, — men looking toward the sea for help.

We have another interesting incident, of smaller proportions than this, when our Lord consented to pay the tribute which was not due from Him, lest He should offend those who would know of his

refusal, and gave to his disciples this direction : “ Go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money : that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” The result is not told, nor doubted. From the sea came the tribute-money.

But before our Lord thus called upon the sea to make this gift to men, He had turned to it that He might add to its wealth. He had given to the sea the men who should use it, and make it of manifold service to the world. He had come to it when its waters were troubled and the tempest swept over it, and with his voice He had given it quiet. He had filled it with the fish who were to have their home in it and to be in a large measure its wealth. From it He had called men to whom should be given the highest honor ever bestowed upon men, to be his disciples and apostles. Surely He might use the sea when He would move from place to place, or when He would make requisition for his needs. Let us learn the lesson. We have a right to look to the sea, that it may give to us, as it does, ungrudgingly ; but we ought also to look to the sea that we may give to it in our liberality. It is not the waters themselves which ask anything at our hands, but the men who belong to it, who are so completely wedded to

it that the sea is a part of their life, so that it fashions their thought, touches their affections, governs their purposes, controls their welfare, and reaches into their destiny.

It is said that there are three millions of men whose home is upon the sea. Who are they? They are men like ourselves, with a common heart, with common sympathies, affections, desires, possibilities — men whose stay upon the earth, like ours, is brief, and who, like us, are soon to sail away for another country, leaving the earth forevermore behind them. This is the great truth concerning them, which is to be remembered: they are men. What men want, they want. What men enjoy, they enjoy. What will help men, will help them. They are generous men, ready to share with a shipmate or even with a stranger what they have gained at a great price. They are men of simple lives, accustomed to trust, unsuspicious, easily led, upward or downward, as may chance to them when they are upon the land. We see them commonly along our streets at their worst, when the long-continued pressure is removed and all authority over them is gone, and the habit of obedience, which belongs with the rule that of necessity is absolute, no longer holds them. In the gladness of a new freedom, it is not strange that they are brought into lawlessness. It soon

passes, and the habit of submission returns upon them. They are easily led into good ways. They seem to have a remarkable talent for listening and for understanding what is said to them, even though it be in an unfamiliar tongue. I have seldom found an audience so quick to seize the thought of a speaker, to discern every turn of his thought, to answer with a quick response to his appeal, as one composed of sailors, though of many nationalities. There is no class of men so easily persuaded to good resolutions which they mean to keep and to Christian lives which they do really live. They become good witnesses for Christ, not only upon the ship, but upon the distant shores to which they are carried. They make our national reputation among many of the tribes and peoples of the world, and create safety or peril for those who may follow them. It was the cruelty of sailors at one of the Melanesian Islands which led the natives to take revenge upon the next white men who came to them, and to send their fatal arrows against the bravest, truest man they had ever seen; and Coleridge Patteson, in his efforts to assist them, through the fault of those who had harmed them lost his life. But a stranger can go to-day to the New Hebrides and be in safety among men who a little time ago were savages, because Paton and his companions

have drawn them by bands of love into the lives of men.

The sailor appeals to us again because of his privation and his peril. For the most of his time he is very far from those things which are dearest to us,—far from his friends, from his home, from all the associations of his life, far from the church and its continual ministry, far from all which can restrain and preserve and elevate the life of a man. His place is one of continual peril. The life of a sailor, it is stated, is but twenty-eight years, of which only eleven can survive the hardships of the sea. The story of a fishing village is a story of privation and sorrow. With grave fear the mother and the wife see the men who are dearest to them sail away; they share every day his peril, and dread the news which any day may bring to them. I do not know of anything more pathetic than to see the groups of mothers and sisters standing upon the pier of a fishing village when the boats are coming home, fastening their eyes with dreadful interest upon the distant boat whose flag is at half-mast, and turning one to another with the inquiry which no one can answer, “Is it for your man or mine?” The prophecy of the days of the Persian war, of the disaster which should come to the hostile fleet, has come true a thousand times, “The women of Colias shall roast their corn with oars.”

It is all very sad, even when we repeat to ourselves the comfort which Sir Humphrey Gilbert gave to his friends as his bark entered the darkness of the night to be seen no more: "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land."

What can we do for these men who are doing so much for us, and at such heavy cost? We can protect them with good laws, we can make sure that their ships are seaworthy, and that they are properly loaded. Few lines have been written in English literature worth more to the world than Plimsoll's line drawn along the sides of every English ship, the line of safety for every sailor. We can make our shore as safe for them as it can be made. Our system of lighthouses is as creditable as anything which we hold toward the coasts of other lands. But all lands which claim a place among the nations illumine their shores. I had occasion not long ago to look over some of the regulations of the lighthouses of England. They were full of the forethought and carefulness which the sailors deserve. Men chosen with utmost skill for the work, controlled by all restraints and regulations, keep the lights. It seems a simple matter to keep a lamp burning, but only men carefully chosen could be intrusted with the work. They are held to fidelity. They are allowed no couch or bed in the lantern or the watch-room, lest they should

fall asleep. No man is allowed to leave his lamp to his successor till he has carefully prepared it. The lives of the men are insured by compulsion, that no anxiety for their families shall hinder them in their work. The simple direction in which all is summed up reads almost like a verse from the New Testament: "You are to light the lamps every evening at sunset, and keep them constantly burning, bright and clear, till sunrise." This they do in loneliness, often in peril. They keep the lamps alight. The tribute of our own poet is not overdrawn:—

"Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same
Year after year, through all the silent night
Burns on forevermore that quenchless flame,
Shines on that inextinguishable light!"

We have also our life-saving service, with strong boats and stout-hearted men, watching against the shipwreck and rescuing men who have no one else to whom they may turn for succor. Think of two thousand lives saved in a single year, and a million and a half dollars' worth of property preserved. A few years ago I was in the little English village of Clovelly, Kingsley's Clovelly, and at the foot of the long street, looking out upon the angry waters, was the life-saving station. The door was open, and I went in. No man was in the house. Upon the wall was a blackboard, giving a list of the

vessels to which the boat had gone, and the number of men whose lives had been saved. It was an inspiring record. I ventured to take down the hat of one of those heroes, and to place it upon my head. I wished that I were worthy to wear it, or that in my life-saving service I might become worthy of such equipment.

We build hospitals for these men of the sea. We provide consuls who shall be the appointed friends of sailors in strange lands. We have homes and chapels along our own coast, with men and women whose whole duty it is to be the friends of sailors, and well are they doing their work. But we can do more than this. We are doing more. We furnish books which they may read in their long voyages. We give them pictures which they can pin upon their rude walls, to remind them of their homes. We give them what are well named "comfort bags," with a Testament, and those things which are of as real value in the small emergencies that come to men far from home. The Testament is a precious gift, but times often come when a needle and thread meet in a more practical way the immediate necessity. Thus are we striving with a zeal which should be greatly increased to make these men as safe when upon the sea as they can be made, and to provide for them whatever will make their stay upon the shore pleasant and

secure. We strive to teach them the truths and duties which belong to the life that now is and to the life which is before us all, the truths and duties which are as pressing upon the sea as upon the land.

It is interesting to observe how much of the imagery of the Bible is drawn from the sea, and is naturally most appreciated by seamen. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee," is the Divine promise. For the obedient, "His peace shall be as a river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea." The prisoner upon Patmos, in the midst of the sea, saw the Son of man in his glory, and the new song of the redeemed from the earth was in a voice for which he could find no better description than that it was "as the voice of many waters." The familiar hymn which is so precious to our thoughts seems almost to have been written by a sailor, and for sailors:—

" Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide,
O, receive my soul at last! "

In all this, I have been speaking only of the real sailor, not of the landsman who works upon a

ship. The life of the sailor has its peculiar conditions which have their own interest, and must be regarded with intelligent discretion. If we turn to the officers of our ships, men who truly belong to the sea, we find men who have a thought and method quite distinctive, and always full of interest. The life of the officer of a ship, in our time, is of necessity a lonely one. He is thrown upon himself, with a responsibility which others cannot feel. He stands by himself in the consciousness of a great trust which makes his life solitary. In this way he becomes a man self-contained, self-reliant, independent. He is his own companion, and comes to find in solitude a fellowship with himself and with his work. I call to mind, as I say these things, one of the bravest sailors who ever commanded a ship, a true sailor, "a sailor-man" he liked to call himself. He had grown up upon the sea, and with it, and in it, till the sea and the man were partners in life. I talked with him in the frankness of our isolation. He told me many things of himself and of a sailor's life, and I wish I could tell them here, as sometimes they came to me in the quiet of his room, or upon the upper bridge at night, when the ship was far away from us, and the stars were nearer than the earth. Some of these things I shall try to give to you. I asked him if it were not very wearisome, the pacing to and fro upon the

bridge, alone, hour after hour. He said, No, there is always something to be done. The officer in his lonely walk must look down upon the ship, where at any moment something may happen that needs his care. He must keep his eye upon the sea, where a sudden change may come; where far away he may see the light of a burning ship, or the signal rocket flashing across the sky, or hear the cry of shipwrecked men from out an unseen boat. There is always something to think about and watch for, and this saves his watch from weariness. Then between us we made this phrase, which he accepted, and which I have remembered, found to be true, and many times commended to those who are weary because of their idleness and narrowness, only these words: "Care is company."

But your responsibility here must be very great, constant, burdensome. "Yes," he said, "yet if you are equal to it, responsibility is pleasant; but to be in a place for which you know you are not fitted, in dread of an emergency which you know you cannot meet, would be terrible." The time came not long afterward when he was to know as he had never known what responsibility means. In the darkness, after all his care and skill, his ship suddenly struck the coast of Wales. It was a fearful moment. Whether she would float or not he could not tell. Whether the lives intrusted to

his keeping would be lost, he could not know. For what he ought to do, he could rely only upon his own manhood and seamanship. Not a life was lost. The broken ship remained afloat, and he brought her safely into port. One good thing, he told me, came of that experience. "I found myself. I never knew before what I should do, what I could do, in an hour of sudden peril like that. I found that my mind would be clear, my hand would be steady, and I could do, under the terrible stress of the hour, all that it was in me to do. I found myself." Clearly, though he did not say so, the discovery of himself, this new acquaintance with the man he was to live with everywhere, through all his days, was pleasant to him. He held in honest honor the man he had discovered. The tender heart of the sailor went out to the ship which he had endangered and had rescued, and which had kept herself afloat, as his thought was, to bring him and herself into safety; and when it was suggested that another ship might be given to him, he answered out of a sailor heart, "Do you think I could leave a ship that had stood by me as this one has?" His fidelity and heroism were characteristic of the true sailor. We talked one day of the rule of the company which forbade that the captain should take his wife and children with him. "It is right," he said. "It would be very hard if any-

thing should happen to the ship, and we should have to take to the boats, for me to put my own children aside, and let them go down with the ship, while I took the children of these emigrants and put them into the boat, and gave them a chance for their life." Yet he would have done this; any sailor would have done this.

But there was a fellowship beyond this which I have named, the fellowship with Nature. All the air around him, and the wide sea, and the bending heavens were full of the presence of God. He knew the presence, he felt it, he was awed before it, his poetic mind knew its beauty and its strength; his simple, reverent heart bowed in adoration, waited in confidence before the presence of the Almighty, whose footsteps were indeed upon the sea. More than other men whom I have been allowed to know he was the prophet of Nature, and Nature and its mysteries were revealed to him, and from his life and in his artless words passed on to those who listened to him. There has seldom been given to me a more impressive moment than came at night standing with him upon the bridge, the ship silent below us, the waste of waters reaching into the dark, the friendly stars keeping us company. There an officer looked up into the heavens, and finding the planet which would listen to him inquired where our place was upon the deep, and out of the heavens

marked our point upon the earth. It seemed indeed companionship with the Infinite, the fellowship of life with light, in the surrounding presence and care and love of Him who stretches out the heavens with his fingers, and holds the deep in the hollow of his hand.

This was one sailor-man of whom I have been telling, a rare man, even among men of his birth and calling. But the elements which combined in his rich life are found in varying proportions in other sailors, and admiring them in him we learn to recognize them in others where they are less conspicuous. Every sailor may well become the greater in our thoughts for seeing one to whom our admiration is our ready tribute.

In the room of the sailor of whom I have been speaking, fastened to the wall, were the verses of an English poet, — the prayer of sailors who had been told that it was said in the New Testament that in the world toward which all ships are sailing there shall be no more sea. They were startled, and felt lost. The sea was their home. They knew no other. They had no life apart from it, and what could they do in a world where they were to stay forever if there was no more sea, and nothing to which they were accustomed? Then they cried out in their passion and their longing to the great God to listen to the prayer of sailor-folk, and give them back their sea. The prayer was heard.

We cannot change the world that is before us, but we can train the men of the sea for the life of that country which is their home and ours. We can bring them into the Fatherhood of God, into the friendship of Him who often was in the fishers' boats, who knew the waves and winds and ruled them, and who chose his closest friends from fishermen. We can teach the sailor truth, virtue, piety; prepare him to leave the sea and enter upon the land, prepare him for the place which the Friend of sailors has prepared for them.

Pardon me if I speak one more personal word. My father was a sailor. I was a boy when he came back from a three years' voyage. The ship had been signaled from far away, and a friendly officer of the Customs let me go down in his boat, for he knew who I was. He was a plain man, but to my memory one of the finest-looking men I have seen. As we drew near the ship I stood in the bow, and at length could see my father leaning over the side of the ship, and watching for the boat which at last would bring him to his home. When we came near enough together I waved my cap. He saw me, and called out to one of the men, "Throw a rope to my boy." The sailor threw the rope, and in a few moments the boy was in his father's arms. It was a simple thing, but many a time since have I heard that voice, that command

which has become entreaty ; and it has become the voice of the Father who is in heaven watching some child of his who needed to be brought near to Him ; and I have heard the word and loved it, and tried to make it God's word to me, and the inspiration of my life, " Throw a rope to my boy ! "

XIV

MENDING, LAUNCHING, AND FOLLOWING

S. MARK i. 16-20

MENDING, LAUNCHING, AND FOLLOWING

IT was quiet on the Sea of Galilee in the morning when Jesus walked that way and saw two boats standing by the lake, and the fishermen washing and mending their nets. All the night they had taken nothing, but that day was to make up for the failure. To this point the story is commonplace, but the end of it is of interest to all the world. He bade them push out a little from the shore; and when He had taught the people from one of the boats, He directed the fishermen to launch out into the deep, and to let down their mended nets. It was against their experience, but they obeyed because He said it. This is Christian obedience in a very simple form, — the doing at Christ's word what otherwise would not be done. They filled their nets until the strain was too heavy upon them. After they had come to the shore, He bade them leave their boats and follow Him, to be made fishers of men. This also they did because He said it, and we who hear of this to-day are of the fish they caught.

There are three parts in this narrative which is three times given to us in the Gospels. The mending was necessary, because, if the nets had inclosed no fish, they had been torn themselves. Why not leave them so, a witness to the work of the night? This might be better than mending them. The torn battle-flag is of much greater worth than if it were mended, for its signs of brave work upon the field. One thing justified the mending, that the nets were to be used again; that failure had not wrought discouragement. In deep waters and under a new command, success might wait upon enterprise. It reads like a parable of life, for we come often to the mending time. Our body and our nerves need to be replenished with strength. It is strange that a harp of a thousand strings should keep in tune so long. Our plans need mending, and our purposes, and our desires. Our habits need to be examined and mended. Our courage and hope and ambition need to be reënforced. We have to make over our companionships, and often our friendships must be restored. Life must be adjusted to new conditions by mended methods; hearts that have grown "weary with dragging the crosses too heavy for mortals to bear" must have rest that they may recover strength. It was a bright saying of our great preacher, and one whose truth he felt even

in his stalwart form, that there comes a time when a man must "put in for repairs." But this necessity is a sign that we have worked, and our mending that we are to work again; else why do we seek new strength? We are obliged to do this. The future appeals to us. Ambition urges us on. Nothing but death can justify despair. The Book to which we turn for guidance has always a forward look. Duty faces the days to come. Nature, which rests through the winter, thinks upon the coming spring, not upon the past autumn. Mending is a prophecy; mended is a promise. "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it," the philosopher says. He is not accurate. The reward of a thing well done is the next thing which can be done. The branch that bears fruit pledges itself for more fruit. If in some season it has been thwarted by cold and storm, it must recruit its energy, and begin again. The reward of bearing fruit is the cleansing, that it may bear more fruit. It is not loss, then, this wear of life, because it is not the end. Under ordinary conditions the tearing of the net has the recompense of fish; if not this, the fishermen have gained something in experience and new skill, and have the next night before them. The nets are torn, not the man. Or if the body is worn, the soul is strong. The outward man may perish,

while the inward man is renewed day by day. If the reward of living do not find him here, there is a to-morrow of our life. Some fish are taken from the sea, and some are found upon the shore, on the coals which a Divine Hand has kindled.

“I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

Thus in the goodness of God we are encouraged to go on to new attainments, but we are allowed times of rest for the recovery of strength, for the refreshment of our spirit. The legend on the seal of the Cambridge Hospital is appropriate, “God mends; man tends.” Thus our conscience and our will are maintained. Our attachments to the things that are past are not destroyed, but are put in good order for the work that is before us. The time is well spent which is given to mending our strength, provided we are to make use of the strength in new service. Our Lord himself rested on the well because He was weary, but He gave to Samaria and to the world the revelation of God, who is spirit, and the direction for the worship which will please Him.

But when our life has thus been mended, it is not that we may simply repeat the past, but that we may go on to better things. Launch out into

the deep, Christ said, and there let down your nets. The word is timely. We are doing this from the beginning of our days. From the boat which the child sets floating on the brook he comes to the man's boat; from the child's book to the man's book; from school to college, then out into the university of the world, and to the cares and honors which can there crown his efforts. Life is to be made deeper, not merely by this natural increase of its powers and their employment, but by the doing of deeper things. Deeper thoughts, deeper intentions, deeper affection and devotion, are to mark our increasing days. We go on thus to old age, but old age may well find itself in waters deeper than it has ever known. Age has its special advantages for the best work of the man. Age is kind if its conditions be kindly. From certain things which have been done, from a stirring life out of doors, from a busy commitment to the affairs of the world, we may have to turn away; but one whose net has become past mending in its meshes of thread may yet cast it in the deeper waters; not retiring through timidity, indolence, inertia, through contempt for what has been done, with a selfish plea that one has done his share for the world, and in the abating of hope and aspiration; but in gentle courage, a steady ambition, the full use of the powers which have grown through

years of wisdom, keeping his boat still out upon the sea.

“ For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”

“ What makes old age so sad is not that our joys, but that our hopes cease,” Richter said. We can keep our hope if we keep our thoughts afloat. There is more to do, more to enjoy, more to be, so long as there is deep water for our boats.

To this the world is suited. With all our new learning, there is yet much to be known of the heavens and the earth. Knowledge is to be enlarged almost without limit. If there is no new truth to come to light, there is so much to be learned of all truth that it will be ever new. Higher and wiser service always awaits us. Grandeur attainment invites us, and beyond these years of change stretch the endless days of Paradise. Think and read more deeply. Serve with purpose deeper and truer. There is danger in our time that we shall keep near the shore, or sail over the shallow waters where we can see the sand that is underneath. Life has more liberty and more enlargement than once, but perhaps the old times were deeper than these. Whatever may be thought of the religious system of our ancestors, it

is certain that they did not trifle with any duty or shrink from any truth. Puritanism went deep down into the realities of this world, and of all the worlds which we anticipate. We must be on our guard lest with our finer boats, and sails more delicately woven, and nets fashioned with finer thread, and more complete charts, and better compasses and sextants, we yet skim the surface of things, and miss the deeps out of which the boats may be filled. It is not so much the boat and the net as it is the fisherman upon whom reliance must be placed. Whatever be the ship, she must sail on deep waters if she is to bring home a precious freight. Many things are said in the New Testament in which this word "deep" is used. The simple phrase of the woman of Samaria may be extended far beyond her thought, "The well is deep." Yes, every well whose waters are pure and unfailing is deep, and the work of Him who comes down to our boat is to give us something that we can draw with, however far below us the waters wait. The common saying holds a reality, that "truth lies at the bottom of the well." The man who is commended because he wisely builded a house which no wind or rain could remove digged deep and laid the foundation far below the changes which might move around his structure. The seed cast on thin earth brought no fruit to perfection.

In the deep places of the good ground the wise sower cast his seed, where no stones could check its growth, and no sun could scorch it, and no thorns could choke it, but it would bring forth fruit a hundredfold, or sixty or thirty, because it had what is so graphically described as "deepness of earth."

Again, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are revealed to us by his spirit, who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Again we find the exultant apostle exclaiming, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Again, he prays that we may be able to comprehend the depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, while he rejoices that his life is so firmly established that not depth shall be able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the vision which allures us. This is the sea which stretches before us. Whatever we have done, there is the call to larger duty; however far we have ventured, the waters still stretch before us, holding their greater reward. Let us mend the nets and make them whole, and then launch out for more than we have ever drawn into our boats, and when the end comes, let it find us on the deep waters.

But there is one truth further, without which

our advance may prove a disappointment. Our Lord went with his disciples when they launched out with their mended nets; and when He bade them come out into greater service, with the highest commission ever given to men, He did not send them, but He called them, and his word was as rich in the safety it promised as in the accomplishment which it made possible. "Follow me," He said. In all this there was nothing abrupt. Everything was orderly. Each of his commands was an advance upon that which had already done its work. But why should He detain them upon the sea, when He had this larger ministry in store for them? Why not at once, seeing that time in this world is of so great account, and spiritual things have an importance which belongs to no others, — why not bid them drop where they were the nets that they were mending, and, leaving their boats uncared for, follow Him out into the world? It was not his way. There was no haste in his methods. Not more orderly is the Nature which He rules than the methods of grace which He administers. They ought to leave their nets in good order if they were to become apostles. Silver and gold He had none. It might be requisite that the money for which they sold the fish should be taken with them into the world where friends might be remote. Again, it was of real advantage that

they should know his power if they were to commit their lives to Him, and leave the only occupation with which they were familiar to take up a strange manner of life, to spend their days as no days had ever been spent before, in a ministry for which there was slight precedent. Or, again, it is always well that a great enterprise be taken up in a brave spirit. He found them at an hour of discouragement. They had spent a whole night and had taken nothing. They were in no mood to venture into other service, nor was their disheartenment the true preparation for the work which would require courage and patience, hope and cheerfulness, more than any work which had been given to them or to any men to do. By these simple ways did He prepare them to hear the new summons and promptly to obey, and to go out with Him, they knew not whither, to encounter they knew not what, to do and to teach what never had been asked of them before.

This was indeed Christ's way. He sought to gain the willing heart and mind of men, and then He would bid them to his service. He would teach them before He made them teachers, He would bring them to himself before He set them to bring other men, He would be their Shepherd before He asked them to be the shepherds of his sheep, He would fill their nets before He asked

them to fill his own. Not as He taught it, merely, but ever since, when it has followed his teaching and that of his apostles, the whole religious life has been an orderly process. The blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear, have been found in this order, in the lives of men as well as upon the fields which they planted.

They followed Him, but what made them do this? He made them. There was no constraint but the constraint which no one could perceive. His presence attracted them, his voice, his words, the very blessing that He had given to them out of the lake, after their failure, so that without compulsion they were compelled to follow Him, even as He said; for their hearts answered to his voice, and their desires, excited by his blessing, would have carried them with Him, even if He had not bidden them. How could they fail to follow Him, after seeing Him, and feeling the attraction of his spirit?

Following is very common. It is the first thing we do, yielding to the parental leading, and afterward to our teachers and masters, to those who are wise enough and good enough to command our confidence, and out of their lives to help us to fashion our own. This is necessary, if we are to make any advance: that men shall push out beyond the company and, making their separate

discoveries, call us to come quickly to the place which they have reached by a long and weary road. If we can consent to follow those who are able to conduct us beyond ourselves, then we are always the gainers. There is comfort in the confidence which makes us followers. It in no wise lessens our independence, but rewards it from the independence of wiser men, when we are willing that they should teach us what they have found to be true. Christ came to these men as He comes to us, with a wisdom as perfect as his love. He knows what all men need to know, He can do what all men need to have done, and can give to our life the success which He drew to his own. Follow these men as they go away with Him. They have the delight of his society. He talks to them, and they hear what they have never known. He explains to them the mystery of life. He teaches them by parable and by miracle, so that day by day they are learning, and bringing their learning under his divine and gracious influence. He gives to them more than they heard, more than they saw. He gives to them himself, and slowly his influence passes upon them, and they learn to be meek and lowly and true in service. They are slow to learn it, for greatly they have need of it. When He left the world they were far from having all that He had offered them, but they had the beginning

of all truth, and the memory of the life from which the truth had come to them. The presence of his spirit which He breathed upon them, and left remaining in their hearts when He had gone away, would bring the truth to perfection in them till they could be indeed his witnesses in a life which had been learned from Him, with a teaching which repeated his words of promise. They touched Him and were made whole. It was an instruction in living which could be gained nowhere else in all the world, — not then, not at any time, in all the ages, — and it came from being with Him, walking the same road, resting in the same house, sharing the same experience, resting in the bosom of his compassion. This it was to follow Him. This it is to follow Him. They went out to do more than they had ever dreamed of doing, and they are the illustrious men of the centuries. They gave counsel and instruction to the master mind and heart which more than any other has controlled the thoughts of men whom He has reached. Their extended knowledge founded schools, sanctified the home, exalted the life, made common things sacred, enlarged hope and joy and every spiritual force, and brought down upon the earth, to touch it here and there, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God. Not to us, though we become his followers and theirs, will so great a work be

given ; but a work like theirs calls us, every one. We follow Him, and the heart becomes wise, and the life is a sacrament of usefulness. There is no way into the truth but by Him who is the Truth, and from Him come to men the Resurrection and the Life. The world still needs, almost as much as it needed it then, to know God and Him who came from God, and none can give this to the world save as they learn it from Him, and only they learn it who steadily and lovingly follow Him.

Thus the call of Christ is taken out of time. There is no chronology in Christian service. You cannot set the boundaries of years around the Sermon on the Mount, or the Lord's Prayer, or those holy hours before the Cross when Jesus revealed himself to these fishermen as none had ever seen Him before, and gave to them the truth which none have received except as they have taken it from Him. The call of Christ in its promise and opportunity is as new as the light which flowed over the land this morning, as new and fresh as when light was first compacted into sun and stars. Christ moves forward, and the word of life is "advance." Steadily onward, never pausing, finding always new pleasure, gaining always new visions, they go on who follow Him, till at last they come beyond the world, and look upon the

throne of God and of the Lamb, and, looking, follow Him forever. All these truths are gathered up in the teachings of an unnamed writer who himself had made proof of that which he taught. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us" — this is mending our nets — "and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." Can anything be more delightful than this? Can anything better foster our eager aspiration and reward our loftiest hopes? Knowledge, truth, strength, character, life, eternal life, come to those who follow Him, with glory, honor, immortality. It must needs be so. To follow Christ is to come where He is, and He is enthroned in the excellent glory. We cannot avoid this for ourselves. We must be wise and true; we must be strong and helpful; we must have the peace of God and the joy of the Lord, — if we follow Him whithersoever He leads us, across the earth, beyond the splendid stars. It is forward, then. Who would repeat yesterday, or live again the year that is gone, however good it was in its season? As God lives, and our souls live, there is something better than yesterday for every man, and to this He calls us who has revealed it, and we find it when we follow Him who has entered into the fullness of the glory of God. We can change the scenery of life, however plea-

sant may have been the landscape before which we have lived, and go on under fairer skies, where the Tree of Life, with its twelve courses of fruit, is watered by the River of the Water of Life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I do not attempt to describe this in detail. I cannot. No man has ever been able to do it. One must see it for himself and have it for his own. But he is far from the thought of the love of God who is not certain that the more he lives in this love and has his being in its truth, he shall advance from grace to grace, from glory to glory. The religious life is not an outward service, a philosophy, a system of truth, a religion, even; but it is the Christ life, and his light becomes our own. We follow from the dawning of the day and along the growing hours into the evening twilight, down into the darkness of the night, on into the light of a new day, the day over which the shadows never fall, the day of the endless life. Oh, friends, we are by the Sea of Galilee. The years stretch before us. Let us mend our nets, then launch out into the deeper places of the world; and mended, launching, let us follow Him!

XV

THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES

S. MATTHEW xiii. 11

THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES

THE term "mystery" as it was used by St. Paul was very likely borrowed from the Grecian mysteries which had their home at Eleusis. What these were no one can tell. So very important were they, and so sacred, that every free-born Athenian was expected to be initiated into them. The ceremony was most impressive. At night the candidates were led through the darkness into the lighted temple, where they saw and heard what they could never reveal. One writer has left the remark, "Those who are initiated entertain sweet hopes of eternal life." It is said that in times of peril one man would turn to his neighbor with the anxious inquiry, "Are you initiated?" With all this the apostle was doubtless familiar. He used the term especially to describe the secret purpose of God regarding the Gentiles. What God would do for the Jews was plain enough; what He would do for others was not so clearly revealed. But when Christ came, and the gospel was preached, it was found that the Divine Grace was

for every man in all the world. The mystery, therefore, as the apostle wrote to the Christians at Colossæ, was this: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This was the manifestation of the gracious intent of God.

But our Lord used the term "mysteries" in a larger way, and to his disciples He said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." He would have the word include all the truth which He taught. His disciples who listened to him, and received his teaching and understood it, knew the mysteries which from all others were concealed. But why were there any mysteries? Why were not the secrets of heaven spread abroad like the stars, that every man might see them? It was because men were not able to see them. As there are books which we do not put into children's hands, as there is art of which common workmen have little knowledge, as there are truths in science and philosophy which only those who are instructed can comprehend, so are there thoughts and truths in the kingdom of heaven which must be taught and learned. A mystery is not something obscure, but something which is covered, and from which the covering can be removed. When we are able to receive it, it ceases to be a mystery. Thus a sealed letter is a mystery; but when it is opened, the mystery at once

disappears. Perhaps not, for it may be written in a language which is unknown to us. Then when one has learned the language he becomes possessed of the mystery. Perhaps not, for the letter may contain words whose meaning he does not know, technical terms which are entirely strange to him, and not till he has learned the meaning of these does he gain the mystery that is concealed. It is very plain that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are truths which can be learned by common men if they will listen to one who can teach them. The notion which some appear to hold that heaven in its truth and purity and blessedness has nothing which any man cannot readily understand and enjoy without being taught is not to be indulged. Heaven is thus lowered to the capacity of men, and bereaved that all men may certainly possess it. This is not the method of the New Testament, which leaves heaven a place of glory and holiness, and changes men that they may enjoy it ; raising the common man to the high heavens, and not bringing heaven down to the plane of the common thought and desire.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal to men the Divine Mysteries, and to bring them in all the wealth of their meaning within the comprehension of the wise man and the child. Mystery is all around us. It is in this world with

its life. It is in the stars in their courses, and the light which streams down upon the earth. Even of this we must say with the apostle, "We know in part." The mystery is in men who live upon the earth, and in their life, with its meaning and intent. Wordsworth well calls it, "This unintelligible world." We are learning more and more about it. Students study the mysteries and explorers venture into them, and in this eager desire to enlarge our knowledge lies much of the interest of life. Yet even to-day it is as true as when the Hebrew poet sang, that all Nature is but as the garment of God; that these are but the outskirts of his ways; "and how small a whisper is heard of Him!"

Christ interprets to us the world and human life; but He does more than this, for He reveals to us God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Yet even now our knowledge of God is far from the complete reality of his infinite being. But eternal life is here. It is not eternal living and breathing; it is not eternal working, even in ways of honesty; it is not prolonged suffering, which must at last have its recompense in pleasure. But this is Eternal Life, Christ said, to know God, and Me. Yet we are met by the old question which at once excites

and baffles our hope: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" "Thou art a God that hidest thyself," cried the ancient prophet. He does not hide himself because He would be unknown, but from necessity, as the sun hides itself in its own light, so that if one should insist upon seeing it he would very likely become unable to see anything. God is so great, so glorious, and infinite in all his perfections, that no one is able to look upon Him. Yet we must know God. How strange it is to hear men talk learnedly about Him, as if they could contain Him in the compass of their minds; or lay down the rules for his governance and determine his decrees, constructing their own thought of the Eternal! It were far more worthy of us to bow in adoration.

But Christ reveals Him to us. We learn assuredly from Him what before we dimly saw or imagined or hoped, — that God is spirit; that God is love, and craves for himself the love of the hearts that He has made; that God is our Father, pitying his children, caring for them, loving them in a fullness we are not able to comprehend. We can know God. The words of Him who revealed to men the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are plain and true: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

But herein, again, is a mystery. How can we see Christ? Only as He reveals himself to us. No study which leads us any other way, no thought which keeps us from listening to Him, can make known to us who He is. We must let Him teach us, grateful for the largeness of the revelation if we are not able to receive the infinite truth which He is. Even his coming into the world is a mystery. We speak of the Incarnation, but who shall tell what it is for the Word which was in the beginning with God, and is God, to become flesh and dwell among men? Or what it is for Him who was in the form of God to take on Him the form of a servant, and, consenting to the human life which is really his own, work out the divine purpose which has brought Him into the world? Yet we know that God is manifest in the flesh. Christ has redeemed the world. But again, what is Redemption? His whole life is full of a redeeming power. He gives himself to the Cross, seeking and saving those who are lost. He gives his body to be broken that men may have the Bread of Life, and consents that his blood shall be poured out for the remission of our sins. All this is plain, for this He plainly taught. They who receive this gracious teaching know the mystery of Christ; not those who only hear of Him, admire Him, and consent to his precepts as the best rule of life, but

those who truly learn of Him, believe his words because He speaks them, grateful for all they are able to understand and trustful for the larger knowledge which other years and other worlds may bring.

How strange it is, again, to hear men talk of Him easily and lightly, as if He were one of themselves, and define Him and bound Him whom angels worship, whom we are able to look upon because He comes veiled, that we may see Him! Whereas, we should, in thankfulness which cannot be expressed, listen to Him in silence, receive his words without question, obey them in unswerving fidelity, trusting his promises with an assurance nothing can interrupt.

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell.”

With all the greatness of St. Paul's knowledge, he held it as his master desire to know Christ. I bow my knees, he said, writing to men who had learned of him, and who needed more than he could teach them, — I bow my knees and pray that you may be strong “to apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” Had men known who He was, they had not crucified the Lord of glory. Did we know who He is, He were not kept knocking at the door. We should let our adoration

blend with the reverence of the angels. Let us also fall upon our knees and remaining there give thanks for the knowledge which has been granted us, while we pray that we may know Him whose love for us passes knowledge.

We cannot perfectly know Christ and perfectly understand his divine far-reaching words ; but to the humble and attentive heart it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Thus learning of Christ all which we are able to receive, and allowing this to increase, we learn of God. But this revelation of God is greater than we can comprehend. Christ revealed this, that there is in the Divine Nature an eternal threefoldness in which we should believe. He said that when a man became his disciple, and thus the child of God, the name of God was to be written with water upon him ; and the name which thus became sacramental, always marking him who bore it as the friend of the Son of God was this, — The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. Into this the disciple was baptized. There men should have stopped, bringing to this truth other words which confirmed it, and finding in their own lives some analogy to the life of the Eternal. It was a place for silence and worship and waiting ; the worship in reverence, the waiting for light. Men had been better off if they had been able to consent to

this. They were not able. It was not in their mind. They took this mysterious revelation and gave to it a name which has been a misfortune. They defined it, and with every new sentence lessened the clearness of the truth. There was no language in which the Eternal Nature of God could be expressed, and the thought became confused when words which were never meant for such uses were set in this high employ. The words were convenient. The definitions aided the interchange of thought, but they should have been held as the inadequate expression of an eternal mystery. But presently men began to contend, to form separate schools, to set up distinct churches, to part altar from altar, and temple from temple. It seems the strangest thing in all the contests of the world, that grown-up men, believing and calling themselves Christians, should dispute and separate and accuse and disown one another, when the whole contention related to the deepest and highest truth of the universe, the innermost nature of the Eternal God. There were other methods into which men were driven by their reluctance to wait upon a mystery. They resorted to that which has never been successful in religious thought, and tried by the rules of the earth to prove and disprove the thoughts of men. They took slate and pencil to find out if three things could be one thing. Some

said that it could not be, and they held to their figures. Some said that there was a higher use of figures than that, a heavenly method; and giving up their pencils, they appealed to faith, as if faith were less accurate than arithmetic. We are growing wiser, I think, though we are not yet wise enough for the light which is given to us. In the presence of the infinite nature of God, it becomes us to stand, or, better, to kneel and be still. We have no occasion to be baffled or to be disturbed. We are not asked to spend the swift years of life in the attempt to be wise beyond what the Son of God has spoken. Here are his words, and to those who listen to Him it is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord very clearly revealed to us the care of God over all his creatures, so that the sparrow and the lily are tenderly regarded; and He taught that we are of more value than many sparrows, and that a greater care will be given to us. To listen to Him is to believe in the Providence of God which is always mindful of us; and in a special Providence which regards us every one, and which, when the need comes, passes readily into miracle. Yet we are not altogether clear concerning the ways of God with men. The allotments of life are not as certain as we think they might be. The prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions which befall the good

confuse us. At times there seems to be little thought of us, and we are driven for an instant to flee from Providence to what men call Fate, or Chance, which is a form of Fate. There is a mystery in Providence. There must be, for the ways of God are after his mind, and not ours. He sees in a perfect light. He regards us with a more accurate knowledge; and his purposes take a broader and longer range. At last, when we know more of the mystery of Providence, the things which have confused us here will be regarded with content. Our Lord's word to one of his disciples may be extended beyond the meaning of that moment. He would wash the feet of the man. The man protested that He should never do it. Then wisely he consented to that which he did not approve, and Jesus spoke to him the words which cover many interests that are greater in our minds: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

It is among the plainest of Christ's teachings that men shall pray. It is our nature, for the child untaught asks for the thing he wants, and seeks for that which he would find. We are readily brought to ask higher gifts of one who is able to bestow them. He gave this as a principle of life, a rule of discipleship. Nothing is clearer than this. Yet here again is the mystery. Why should God need to have us ask Him for what He sees that we require?

Why should his love need the poor quickening of our desires? Why is it that so often men who do not pray are prospered and those whose life is prayer are afflicted? Why is the answer so long delayed, and why does another thing come rather than that we sought? There are many suggestions to which we cannot make a reply which will content those who do not care to pray. Yet if we listen to our Lord, who himself had need to pray, who spent whole nights upon the mountain in prayer, we shall learn the mystery, and pray and believe and wait, certain, because He said it, that the things we need and ask, that we may fulfill our ministry, shall surely be granted to us.

We look along our years, and see that presently we shall disappear from the earth, and what will come to us then? We shall live then. "Because I live, ye shall live," He said. This we are sure of. "I am the Resurrection, I am the Life," He said; but long afterward the apostle to whom it was given especially to be the world's teacher in his name, wrote to those who had believed on Christ, it is a mystery: "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. This mortal must put on immortality. Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." He was well aware that he had not made all things clear to his friends in Corinth,

and he asked their question, that he might reply to it. "The dead are raised up, you say; but how are the dead raised up? What is the body with which they come?" He answered with another mystery: "The seed falls into the ground, parts with the form of its life, and reappears as grain. God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. So shall it be with men." We have gone no further than this. We still read those words as the fullest unveiling of the things which are awaiting us; and if we can receive the teaching in which he believed, for which he was content to suffer, we hold the mystery in quietness, waiting for the disclosures which in our common thought will soon enough be made. But it is very noticeable that from this inspired record of the Resurrection and immortality he passes to the conclusion which touches our daily life; from the mystery of the future to the assurance of the present: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

This is to be noticed, that whatever of truth may for the present be hidden from us, we are denied none of the truth which we need for our daily life, for the doing of our duty, for the bearing of our burden,—nothing which is needed for comfort and strength, for the enriching of the hope which shall

send our thoughts into the eternal day. We may well mark the distinction between mysteries which it would be of intense interest and mysteries which it would be of immediate advantage for us to know: for those we may be kept waiting, but these are always waiting upon us. The words of the old preacher are true, perhaps more true than in his time: "The articles of our faith are those depths in which the elephant may swim; and the rules of our practice those shallows in which the lamb may wade." Dr. South adds, "As both light and darkness make but one natural day, so both the clearness of the things to be done, and the obscurity of the things to be believed, constitute but one entire religion." We should be very glad that we know. We should be very glad that we know only in part, that there remain to us treasures of knowledge yet to be opened; higher thoughts, better thoughts, clearer revelations, than those which have already been granted us. It is this knowledge yet to be revealed which gives interest to the student of Nature, and to every one whose eager mind carries him beyond himself. We are listening to a song so delightful that we are glad to be assured that the strains we shall presently hear are better than any which have reached us. We are happy as we travel to a fine country where we are to see fairer fields and nobler mountains; and sailing in a good

ship upon a kindly sea we are reluctant to touch the coast where the voyage will end. The astronomer continues to search the heavens, adding night to night, and glass to glass, in the patient belief that new worlds will break upon his vision, new light flash from remoter suns. Nature waits patiently for our search. It was only a few days ago that a great telescope which had been sent westward in triumph fell, with the building which contained it, and it cannot be used till weary months have raised it to its place. The glass fell, but not a star trembled; and through all the rebuilding, and the lifting of the great eye of the world toward the heavens, the stars will wait, keeping the mysteries which they have held for centuries till men are able to perceive them.

We are living in the light. It was truly the light of heaven and the light of the world which came among men when the Son of man appeared. We have clear visions of God who is our Father, of his unchanging love, his infinite mercy, his purpose of eternal grace. We know Christ. We have heard his words. The truth He taught we repeat to children, and we send it out to gladden the earth. We know the blessedness of eternal life, of the walk with God along these common ways, of the earnest of the everlasting inheritance of the saints. But we do not know it all. Some

mysteries have been revealed, and are ready to be revealed to any heart which will learn of the Light and the Truth of the world. But one, that disciple whom Jesus loved, with great joy wrote the words whose meaning has lost nothing of its grace : We are the children of God, but it doth not yet appear, — I cannot tell you what we shall be. But when the mystery of Christ is more perfectly revealed, and we see Him as He is, we shall be like Him. St. Paul cried, “Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !” And with rejoicing heart he bore witness to “the riches of the glory of the mystery of God, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

What, then, are we to do ? We are to learn of Christ, to be his scholars, to be content to begin with our letters, to advance to the simple truths in words of two letters, or three. Sometimes men have risen to higher attainments. Here and there has been a man who needed words of many syllables to express the truth which has been given to him. The chief point is to begin there with Him. “Unto you,” He said, “unto you who hear me, and believe and obey, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”

It will be worth much to us to be well assured that our life is bearing us steadily onward into the light, that in this early morning of our years we

have the noon before us. I have been interested in reading, as you have done, of that which came to the Arctic explorer who now is receiving so much praise and congratulation. He is very frank, as in his artless words he tells us, not alone of what he did and saw, but of what he felt and hoped, of his defeats and triumphs, and the experience of the mind and heart within him. He had studied it all out beforehand. He expected to find a shallow polar sea and a current which would easily move him upon it. He came to the Polar Sea, and there was no line on board the *Fram* which was long enough to sound the icy waters on which he floated. His theory of the current disappeared. Thus, thrown out of his expectations, baffled in his immediate purposes, what should he do? He recalled, what I had forgotten, that Columbus discovered America by means of a mistake, and that a mistake which was made by another, and he writes: "Heaven only knows where my mistake will lead us. Only I repeat once more, the Siberian driftwood on the coast of Greenland cannot lie, and the way it went, we must go." To this current he was ready to commit his ship and his hope. I read it as a parable. In this world we are often mistaken. The shallow seas of life which we look for prove deeper than we thought, and the currents we thought to find are not in

waiting for us. What shall we do, — far at the north of our days on strange waters? Trust the currents that are certain. Our thoughts may betray us, but Nature and grace are honest. If we are on the course that leads through life to light, there will be many signs of it. The growing consciousness of a divine spirit, an answered prayer, a hope fulfilled, a longing satisfied beyond our thought, many a thing perhaps as trifling on the sea of life as Siberian driftwood on the coast of Greenland, will make us certain of our way, sure that we are on the stream whose deep waters move constantly onward to that country which is our own. There will come to us from the further shore words of cheer, of call, of welcome, and something of the fragrance of the celestial country, borne upon the winds, the harbinger of the endless delight. All this comes to us when tenderly and patiently we listen to Him who alone is able to teach us, and learn and enjoy aforetime the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

There is for all of us a glorious mystery, a rich and blessed mystery. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory. Christ in us, the hope of glory, is the riches of the glory of the mystery of God. There is little in English poetry which is more delicate and delightful than the story of the country boy, living far inland, to whom there came a shell,

brought perhaps by some sailor returning from his voyage. The boy wondered at its convolutions and at the sound from its smooth lips, when he held it to his ear, —

“ In silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely ; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy ; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.”

The boy heard the carols on the coast, and the anthem underneath the stars, the song by the fisher's boat of Galilee, and the organ tones of the great deep when Euroclydon smote the waves.

So he who lays his ear upon the heart of Christ listens to sounds from the far away ; mysterious murmurings out of Eternity, — the voice, the still, small voice of God !

XVI

THE SONG IN A STRANGE LAND

PSALM cxxxvii. 4

THE SONG IN A STRANGE LAND

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” Sing it as you would in any other land. It is a song not of the land but of the heart. It is not the mere rejoicing, but the worship of God for his goodness. Our confidence in Him should be so well grounded that no change of land can change our song.

The Psalm of the Captivity is one of the finest, while one of the saddest, in the Psalter. The people had been carried away from their own country; and as exiles, despoiled and despairing, they went down by the rivers of Babylon, the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Chaboras and Ulai, and there, away from the city, they uttered their lament. They felt that there was more sympathy in the river than in the city’s streets. There is nothing in Nature which seems more in sympathy with the changing experience of men than the ocean, which is continually changing, sometimes placid and restful, sometimes full of energy and loud complaint. They felt the friendliness even of the rivers; and

in the weeping willows, where they hung the harps for which they had no use, they found a mind kindred to their own.

It had been very much better if they had brought their songs into their exile, and had continued to sing them. It would have promoted their own courage, lessened the sorrows of their banishment, quickened their hope, uplifted their spirit. It would have been much better for their children also. When the first generation had passed, and the opportunity to return to their own country was offered to those who had inherited their name and nationality, they nearly all preferred to remain where they were. It is estimated that not more than one in seven cared to go back from Babylon to Jerusalem. They were contented in exile. There they had formed alliances and made investments, and the habits of a strange land had become their own. In losing the songs which had expressed the patriotic longing of their fathers, the children had lost the love of their own country, which would have been kept alive if the strong feeling which belonged to the Jewish heart had been nurtured by the melodies which expressed in passionate terms their feeling and their devotion.

It would have been better for the people of Babylon to have heard the songs of Israel, to know what Jehovah had done for those who worshiped

Him, to see a confidence in his favor which could not be changed or interrupted. To have this expressed in fine poetry and with vivid imagination, would have been to them a clear and strong witness which might have persuaded some of them to put their trust in the God of Israel. It is to be added to this that Jerusalem deserved the songs. Her history, her glory which could not be forgotten, the faith which she cherished, surely should have had the response from every heart that loved her, and the city of the great king should have been celebrated in the loftiest songs of patriotism and religion, the patriotism which is religion.

But leaving these special considerations, let us confess that if we believe in God we should be able to say this everywhere, to sing it under any conditions. Our faith is not at all a matter of geography, to be determined in some degree by latitude and longitude, or by the conditions in which we find ourselves. Our confidence in God should be the act of a free spirit. If God is ever to be praised, He is always to be praised. The trust which will not survive removal must have been always a fragile faith. How could it serve us at any time when we have need of help, or hold up our heart when the burden is heavy upon it? If we are to have a serviceable faith, it must be one whose force is from above, and not from

beneath us or about us. It is when the stress is heaviest that we need the confidence which will bear us up. Who would sail in a ship which was seaworthy only in good weather? The waves and the billows will sometimes go over us, and we need underneath us the arms which are everlasting, from which no force of wind or wave can sweep us away. Let us remember also, that whatever be the changes and losses of life, the greater blessings remain. God does not change, nor separate himself from us. There is in his promises no variability or shadow of turning. The past is ours, with the treasure which it holds for us, and the future has more abundant blessings which will not be removed. The blessings of life which are of the highest value cannot be taken from us, and our belief of this should be so well assured that it cannot be shaken. If the God whom we trust does not change, the trust itself should remain firm. Many of the changes of life are of our own making, and in no wise affect the goodness of God. Or if they are of his making, his love which has consented to them remains unaltered, and brings it to pass that all things shall work together for the profit of the faithful, persistent heart. If it was ever true that we are in the care of God and may look for his favor, it is true even more when we are afflicted. His permission of the troubles

which visit us is good testimony to the pleasures which shall succeed them. It is told of two of the rabbis that when they looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem one of them mourned, and the other rejoiced. "See the desolation of the Holy City," one cried; "what is left to us?" "See the desolation of the Holy City," the other answered; "God is left to us. He said that for our sins our city should be ruined, but He promised his favor to the penitent and obedient heart. If his word is sure when it means our loss, it is equally certain when it means our gain. In the desolation of the city is the pledge of its restoration. The word of our God abideth forever."

The truth is, that by the changes of life, if we consent to them, and wisely use them, our character is improved, and our song exalted. That we may sing the Lord's song in the best way we must sing it with the spirit and understanding, even as the apostle taught us. That which deepens our nature and enlarges our thought gives new beauty and melody to the songs which we sing. There was a deep meaning in that which was said to a noted singer by her teacher, when he found that with all the perfection of her manner, and all the accuracy of her voice, something was still wanting to make the music all which it could be in its purity and in the delight which it should give.

He said, "If I could make you suffer for two years, you would be the best contralto in the world." We express the same idea in simpler phrase when we commend a singer for the heart which is in the song, and sometimes we speak of the tear in the voice. It is deep experience which makes deep emotion, and the tear of the heart which gives feeling to the melody. If this be true when we are singing for the delight of men, it is even more true when we are singing to God, who, far beyond all others, can appreciate the true sentiment of the true heart. Feeling is best expressed in music. The captivity which improves the feeling should therefore improve the song, and it were a pity to hang the harp upon the willows at the time when we can bring from it its finest melody.

We are very often in a strange land. There let us sing the song of the Lord which we have learned at home. In this summer time which is carrying so many from their accustomed places, up into the mountains, down by the sea, across the ocean, where new faces will be around us and other lives will wait for the touch of our life, let us be true to God, to ourselves, to that which we have learned in our work, and have gained by our living, and with our best skill give our best witness in our constant faith, and be careful to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Experience itself becomes

a strange land. We are carried into joys that we have not known. New pleasures surround us and minister to our delight. Let us sing the gladness which comes to us, sing the praise of Him who has made our lines to fall in pleasant places. Or if the experience be a sad one, and we become lonely and poor and separate from the world, instead of dwelling alone with our grief let us give it expression in a psalm of longing and desire, in a cry to God for succor, in praise to God for the blessings which remain, and most of all for himself, who is a very present help in every time of trouble, and should be blessed for being present, and for the grace which is to bring the new day when the strange night is overpast. We are more likely to think of God in our sorrow than in our delight. If all things are according to our mind, we become self-sufficient, perhaps, proud of our accomplishments, secure in our prosperity; conscious of a great work that we have done, and which has been rewarded. Unless we are careful we may withhold the praise which we have offered in a humbler time, and lessen the sense of our dependence in all things upon the favor of God. You will much oftener find the heart of a man in prosperity silent, than the heart of a man in adversity. When God lays his hand in chastening upon the trustful soul, for the soul's good, He makes the hand itself a

comfort, and raises the spirit into his own peace. We ought, for all reasons, in whatever land we may have our place, there to think upon the Lord and to sing his song. It may be a hymn of lofty praise; it may be the breathing of a wearied child, longing for comfort. It is not so much the words of the song, as the heart which sings it, that God delights in. The singing preserves the unity of our life, holds together our dark days and our bright days, and makes of them one day. It gives consolation to our faith, and will not let it be shaken because the ground trembles. It keeps the remembrance of our mercies, which should never be forgotten, because they are still our mercies. It quickens our aspiration, and raises the heart into the glad thought of God. We should take pains to keep the heart free from its surroundings, calm and strong, whether we walk by the banks of the Jordan, or wait by the banks of the Tigris. Coleridge said, "It is hard to sing with the breast against a thorn." It is very true, but sing, and sing the Lord's song. Is our praise to be at the mercy of a thorn? Is our hold upon thought and feeling so slight as that? It is fine to rise above the present experience, whatever it may be, and rest in God, singing ourselves into adoration, or singing ourselves to sleep.

We need to cultivate the spirit of praise, for

ourselves and for the promotion of our joy ; for others, that they may be the sharers of our joy, and may rejoice themselves ; and for God, who loves to listen to our songs. The Psalms seem to have been written for this purpose. They teach us, but that is not their great mission. Their great work is to inspire us, to take our thoughts, desires, sorrows, whatever they may be at any time, and to give them words better than our own in which we can praise and worship. There is nothing in the greatly varied experiences of our life which does not find words to meet it in the Psalter. The Psalms will readily "requite serious regard with opportune delight." It has been very well said by an English preacher that the Psalter is not a picture with the light on it, but it is a window with the light in it. The glories of the window are permanent. The light enters them, and takes shape and color for itself, and brings forth the forms of strength and beauty which are in the glass. The dimness becomes softened and cheered, the brightness becomes enriched and glorified. The window reveals the light. The light reveals the window. Steady as the goodness of God should be our thought of Him, and our song which praises Him. The song will give form to our thought, and the thought will give life to our song. It seems to be the case that the Psalms are

less enjoyed than many other parts of the Holy Scriptures. It seems to be true that the mind needs to be pure and generous and spiritual truly to enjoy the Psalms, as we enjoy the Gospels, with the life of Christ embodied in them, and bestowing itself upon us. But when we become more persuaded of the grace of God, more impressed with his constant love, and our feeling is too deep to be restrained, there are no words of our own in which it can be uttered; then the words of the old singers, trained in the school of earnest life and inspired of God, become precious to us. The use of the Psalms is more than this, for it enlarges the feeling, purifies the heart, ennobles the joy, creates the spirit of praise to which it gives the song of the Lord. One has to need the Psalms before he greatly prizes them. When an exceeding gladness comes to the soul, the mind familiar with the words of the old singers breaks forth into their glad strains. It is not till we are the sheep of the Shepherd, and are aware that He is leading us and making us to rest by the still waters that we know the twenty-third Psalm. It is not till we are in the valley of the shadow of death that we can sing, as it should be sung, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." The Psalms deepen and exalt life. The deepened and exalted life is fond of the Psalms. If we carry them with us

into a strange land, we have the song which is to be sung, and the air of the strange land will quicken and sanctify the melody.

This spirit which has been commended is the spirit of heroism, of bravery, and earnestness. The young men and young women who in the summer time are going out from the quiet retreats of study into the world which needs them and is waiting for them are prepared, not merely for pleasant fields and sunny skies, for places of easy delight and graceful service; they are looking forward, with a vision they cannot wholly interpret, to work which is to be done, which they will not refuse, to perils from which they will not flee, to hardship from which they will not shrink. The sword in their hand is polished and the scabbard has no mark, but they are willing, even desirous, that the sword should lose its brilliancy, and the scabbard be so bent with use that the sword cannot be thrust within it. They believe in the victory which they are confident they will deserve, and they propose to be constant in their courage, whatever land may give to them the battlefield.

We have all looked with great interest upon the monument which has been recently erected and dedicated to the devotion of a young soldier who has gained the hearts, not alone of those who knew him, but of all who know manhood and honor it.

He gave his life to the country when his life was before him. He gave himself to the war with all its perils. He placed himself at the head of men despised, untried in peace, and unproved in war, and he led them on to the battles which had more than their wonted danger, and where, because the men who followed him were black, defeat was worse than death. We see him now where he rides among his men, dark faces behind him and before him, a dark-faced drummer-boy leading the way ; but his eye is constant, his heart is steady, his greatness never fails him, as he moves forward to the fate to which he has consented, to fall among the men whom he has led, and who with him were faithful to the end. He sang the song of his country, the song of courage, the song of life, not in the easy days of peace, not in the ordinary dangers of war. He sang the Lord's song in a strange land, and the country joins to-day in the applauding psalm.

We think of the apostle and his companion, who by reason of their fidelity in a strange land were thrust into a pagan prison. They were beaten. They were cast into the inner prison. Their feet were made fast in the stocks. But at midnight the prisoners heard them praying to God, which it was natural that they should do in their extremity, seeing it was for his cause their captivity had

come to them ; but the prisoners heard them singing the praises of God, for they sang the Lord's song in a strange land, and presently the stones were shaking in the prison walls.

This Psalm of the Captivity was not David's. Even if the chronology did not make this plain, the Psalm is not at all in David's manner. This is not the way a man sings who has been brought up as a shepherd, who has guarded his flock, and, when the lion and the bear came against them, has caught the wild beasts with his hands, and torn their jaws asunder ; and who, when the army of Israel trembled before the Philistine, with a stone from his shepherd's sling has laid the giant at his feet. He sang in the wilderness, at the king's court, among the mountains, and in the dens where he found refuge, in the palace and on the throne. They say that he hung his harp in the trees ; not because he had no use for it, but that he might set it to diviner strains than it had ever known. He let the wind play among the strings, and waking he caught the melody of Nature, and with his own hands wedded it to immortal verse. He could sing the Psalms which have become the songs of the world. " In the valley of the shadow of death, thy rod, thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my

life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We remember reverently that at the last Passover, on the last night before his Crucifixion, our Lord took the cup which held his life, and gave it to his disciples with thanksgiving, and that when the old sacrament had been transfigured into the new, before they went to the Mount of Olives, they sang a hymn. This is the true spirit. It is the Christ spirit. He had been born in a strange land, and there the angels sang. At the foot of his own Cross He prayed with his friends and for them, and as they went out they sang the Lord's song.

We are moving on to a land that is strange, — to a land that is not strange, if we are God's children, and He who has ascended into heaven is our friend and Saviour. Let us go on singing our pilgrim songs between the hills of the world, and upon their summits. We shall sing in heaven, but the song of heaven is to be learned here, "Unto him that loved us." If we are familiar with the words and with the tune, we shall be able to sing them on our way; and at the end, where all things are in the harmony of the eternal delight, we shall sing the Lord's song in the country which is our own.

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